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Labor Series

GERALD P. HOLMES

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Harold Davey. I am interviewing Gerald Holmes and today is February 8, 1996. Gerry, first of all, you might tell us about your involvement in international labor. When did it start and in what way?

HOLMES: It started in January 1956 when I started to work in the international branch of the then Bureau of Employment Security. I was there for 18 months during which time I developed programs for foreign visitors mostly under the Technical Assistance Program. I also served on my first Selection Board which involved Wristonization, so you had a big, fat folder for the Foreign Service Officers and you had a little folder with two pieces of paper or so on the people who were being integrated, so this was a real challenge. (This is the first of five boards I served on between 1956 and 1986.) After 18 months I went to the Technical Cooperation Division of the Office of International Labor, which was a predecessor of ILAB (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Department of Labor), and eventually I wound up as Deputy Director of the International Trade Union Organization Division, where I concentrated primarily on Europe.

Q: Now, you retired when, Gerry?

HOLMES: I retired at the beginning of August 1991, so we are talking about 1956 to 1991.

Q: That would be 35 years?

HOLMES: That's right. Virtually all my work with the exception of maybe one year in the Labor Department was in the international area.

Q: Well, I thought it might be useful to discuss some of the veteran labor attachés first before we turn to some of the others. Looking down the list of labor attachés who had five or more overseas labor assignments including one or more in Europe, the first name on the list is Herb Baker. I know he had a number of European assignments during this time. In particular, I remember Italy and Germany near the tail-end of his career. What recollections do you have of Herb Baker's career?

HOLMES: The only place I visited when Herb Baker was there was during his tenure in Bonn. To be honest with you, there isn't any particular incident that comes to mind. Herb, of course, was in Germany back in the 1940s in the Office of Military Government, so he knew the place inside out and had an enormous number of contacts. My impression is that his term in Bonn was very successful in that he didn't have any internal problems in the embassy. I can't remember at this point who the ambassador was.

Q: He went on to Italy.

HOLMES: I never visited Italy while he was down there.

Q: Well, aside from your visiting him personally, what about your role in receiving his reports and other communications?

HOLMES: Well, there was one little incident involving Herb. He sent in a cable because the German Trade Union Federation, the DGB, wanted some materials. I got that cable, and I wondered about it, but I went through channels, and the reply from the AFL-CIO came back and said, "We would be delighted to furnish the German Trade Union Federation with all these materials, but why on earth are they going through the labor attaché? Why don't they just write to us?"

Q: Of course, that was a standard AFL-CIO answer to the labor attachés. I had that in the Near East and South Asia too. They would always say, "Why go through the labor attaché? Why don't they write directly to us?"

HOLMES: At this point at least, they were trying to stay clear of government involvement to the extent that they could. This was before the days of the [AFL-CIO] institutes and taking ICA money and all that stuff.

Q: Well now, Italy was a little trickier question with the various factions and federations.

HOLMES: Italy was clear cut in the sense that at that time you certainly stayed away from the Communist CGIL and unlike some other labor counselors, Herb never had any temptation to flirt with them, so he didn't get into any trouble.

Q: But wasn't there a period when the ambassador under Carter might have wanted to have more of an opening to the left?

HOLMES: Well, there was a problem, and this was when Howard Samuel was here [in ILAB]. The new ambassador, Gardner, couldn't understand and wanted the labor attaché-- I guess it was Herb Baker--to have a contact with the CGIL. I somehow got wind of the fact that Howard was going to weigh in with the AFL-CIO on this. So I marched myself into Howard's office, and I said, "It's kind of presumptuous of me to tell you about trade union matters, Howard, but I think you ought to know," and then I gave him the history of why we were in trouble. And I said, "Among the staunchest defenders of that history is the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO," and as far as I know, nothing more happened on this particular issue. I don't think Howard ever attempted to push it further.

Q: Well, we'll discuss this issue again with some of the other labor attachés as we go down the list. Any more comments about Herbert Baker in addition to these incidents?

HOLMES: No, I think he was one of the more important labor attachés.

Q: You would, of course, say he had the full confidence of AFL-CIO plus?

HOLMES: Absolutely. He was one of the people that they intrinsically trusted in part because of some incidents in Pakistan where he stood up to the ambassador in refusing to have contacts with trade unions that were beyond the pale.

Q: Yes, as I recall that incident second hand, there was a Communist Chinese trade union group, which came to a Pakistan trade union meeting, and Herb and the other labor attachés were invited to be on the rostrum, but Herb didn't want to be on the rostrum with this group. This was 1960. So he walked out, and then the ambassador told him afterwards--I guess it got some bad publicity in the Pakistan press--"Next time you should stay there," and Herb said, "Would you put that in writing?" The ambassador was incensed that somebody would question that his oral word was good. But Herb, knowing the history of what had gone on in the Cold War and so on, wanted it in writing. Instead the ambassador sent a cable to Washington that said, "I want Herb out immediately."

HOLMES: Right.

Q: So Herb was transferred on something like 24-hour notice and left. Well now, moving on to the next person on the list, it's Paul Bergman. Now Paul Bergman had some European assignments. He was in France, I guess, as assistant labor attaché, and then he came to Austria in 1970 and Canada in 1974.

HOLMES: I really don't have too much of a recollection, because primarily I know Paul Bergman from the days when he used to work in ILAB and used to program foreign visitors. I really can't shed much light on his Foreign Service career, to be honest with you.

Q: He was also in the occupation of Germany, I believe, with a group that later came to ILAB and somebody like Herb Baker.

HOLMES: Like Zempel and Wertz.

Q: Yes, Arnold Zempel and Wertz.

HOLMES: I'm not aware of that.

Q: He did work there early on, so that would be before you saw him in ILAB. All right, the next one would be Richard Booth. Now Booth was in Europe in Norway in 1973 as labor attaché. He went to Italy as assistant labor attaché, I know, because of his wife's illness. When he came back to Europe, he was in Belgium in 1983 as labor attaché and Switzerland and Geneva, which is, of course, technically not in EUR but in a way it is. And he had other assignments. What do you recall? In fact, Dick right now is in Mexico as labor attaché.

HOLMES: Well, I don't know to what extent we're telling tales out of school here, but I

distinctly had the impression when I was in Norway in 1974 that the local was really kind of domineering and running the office, which I thought was a somewhat unfortunate situation. Dick never struck me as terribly forceful.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to see him in Italy or Belgium, or his work in Belgium when he was the labor attaché in Belgium at the embassy?

HOLMES: No, not particularly.

Q: Of course, in Geneva you would see him peripherally, not directly. All right, let's go on to Sy Chalfin. Now Sy had a number of European assignments. I see he was in France at the OECD in 1968 and he was in Canada in 1971 and Sweden in 1974.

HOLMES: I remember Sy, of course, from when we both used to work together in the same office here. The first thing I remember about Sy and the Labor Attaché Corps was when he was here waiting for an assignment in Africa.

Q: He went to Ghana.

HOLMES: That's right, and George L. P. Weaver, for whatever personal reasons, wouldn't let him go, wouldn't clear him. Then one day just before Christmas, George L. P. Weaver walked through the office, and lo and behold, virtually nobody was working except Sy Chalfin, who promptly thereafter went to Africa.

Q: Well, it may not be fair to charge, but I can only hypothesize that Weaver may have been looking for an African-American candidate to go to Ghana, and he was holding this open hoping to find one. Then maybe somebody else didn't qualify.

HOLMES: I suspect that's the case.

Q: In France he was at the USOECD.

HOLMES: I remember one thing. Sy was considered for the embassy job, and Sargent Shriver was the ambassador. It impressed me that Sargent Shriver wanted a 21-year-old with 40 years of experience. For some reason he rejected Sy, and Sy wound up in the OECD job.

Q: I recall part of that incident. Sy may have already been in the OECD job and was rejected for the embassy job while he was there, because they brought him over for an interview. But in any event, as I recall, the ambassador wanted an opening to the left like we were talking about in Italy, and he decided that any career labor attaché wouldn't be able to do that because he would be too concerned about AFL-CIO attitudes, so he wanted to get a non-career labor attaché or somebody who was not tied to the AFL-CIO. I thought maybe he wanted to get an academic from outside who would come in on a one-time basis, but when Sy had his interview, as I understand it, Sy had a pipe and looked

very reflective.

HOLMES: That's Sy, all right.

Q: And the ambassador came out saying he's too much like an academic. In any event, he rejected him for the job, and that will lead us to another person actually. Any more about Sy? He went to Canada and Sweden. Have you anything memorable on his assignments in those two jobs?

HOLMES: My impression was that he was particularly successful in Sweden. I always thought Sy's reporting was very thoughtful. Incidentally, Sy didn't come out of the trade union movement, so he didn't have that [background].

Q: But he was a kind of a career labor person.

HOLMES: Oh, yes, no question.

Q: And I think that, therefore, would have been a problem. Of course, the ambassador didn't know what he wanted anyway. Well, I think that brings us to the next person, John Condon, because part of John's career was in France under Sargent Shriver.

HOLMES: He seems to have been in France forever. As a matter of fact, he was there for seven years.

Q: He was assigned there in 1970, and I guess Shriver came in. Shriver was appointed by Nixon, as I recall. He was appointed by a Republican President.

HOLMES: One of the incidents I remember about John Condon was when he got invited to the--I guess it was 1973--Congress of the Communist CGT in France, and the embassy dutifully sent a cable to State to clear it. Dan Gooft, of course, was fit to be tied.

Q: Dan Gooft was the European area advisor at the time.

HOLMES: And Dan was exceedingly close to the AFL-CIO. Anyhow, it hit the fan and the answer was no. Several years later I discussed this with the then political counselor in the embassy, Hank Cohen, and he just smiled and said, "Well, I don't know whether you noticed it, Gerry, but the next time the CGT had a congress, we didn't query Washington."

Q: Well, the result in the first instance was that the embassy was represented by a political officer who worked for another agency.

HOLMES: Well, yes.

Q: But from the AFL-CIO's perspective, it wasn't a labor attaché who did the coverage. Therefore, it was more acceptable, although I imagine they would have preferred that

nobody from the embassy cover it. But the embassy did that.

HOLMES: That's right.

Q: What about John Condon's relations with the ambassador? We talked about an initiative to the left which Sargent Shriver was trying at that time because he felt that the French government was not reaching all elements of the French society.

HOLMES: Well, I don't have the feeling that John ever had any trouble within the embassy. John did a lot of good for the embassy because he was a very broad-gauged officer and he had contact with a wide spectrum. I remember going to the theater one evening with him and Nancy. He had a Gaullist deputy with him. One evening they had a dinner at his house, where I met Jacques Delors, who, of course, in the meantime has gone on to fame. Jacques came out of the Catholic trade union movement. I was just very impressed that whatever John was doing, he had a very, very wide range of contacts.

Q: He had a lot of journalists and academicians come to those parties that you and others have told me about.

HOLMES: It was very impressive. It was also a family effort, because his then much younger children would serve and Nancy would cook, and they did a great deal of entertaining.

Q: As for Ambassador Shriver's opening to the left, London was fortunate in a sense that Shriver left before London was forced to do things that would have hurt John's career, particularly in his relations with the AFL-CIO.

HOLMES: Well, he did pay. He was never persona grata with the AFL-CIO, and he did pay a price for it, because the only ambassadorship he got was to Fiji. Somehow it was my impression that the fellow who helped him is the fellow who is now very much in the news, Mr. Holbrook, who was then Assistant Secretary for the Far East. I think John would have dearly liked an ambassadorship in North Africa, but I think the AFL-CIO nixed that one.

Q: We should say that John's background was with the armed services as a labor relations man in Morocco and North Africa, in and out of France and North Africa but responsible for those bases, one of several successful labor attachés, by the way, who came out of the military. Herb Ihrig is another one who quickly comes to mind. I think there might have been another one.

HOLMES: He was a very good labor attaché in Sweden.

Q: So some of these labor attachés had that background. But then when I went out to Tunisia as a labor officer in 1959, John was working here in Washington as. . . Was he an area advisor perhaps? At least he was waiting to go out to be a labor attaché. He was

being groomed to go to Algeria, but Algerian peace talks or independence delayed his assignment for several years. Eventually I left Tunis and was replaced by Terry Todman as labor officer, but a couple months later John came out as labor attaché shortly after I left in 1961. Then in 1963 he went on to Algeria when that post opened up. So he was in grooming a long time for that job.

HOLMES: He also grew up in the Mediterranean, so that kind of helped.

Q: That's true. Now let's see. Going on to Peter Dodd, he was in Norway in 1976, which was his only European experience. Of course, you've seen him in other places.

HOLMES: I saw Peter in Norway. If I remember correctly, I arrived, and one of the things I asked him about was why there was no report on the last trade union congress. He allowed as how the DCM, Mr. Bremer, I guess one of Kissinger's boys, said it wasn't important enough to report on. So I don't think Peter had too happy a time at that embassy. They still had the same local, incidentally, in the labor attaché office, but there was no doubt in my mind that Dodd was running the office.

Q: I don't know if I mentioned this in my interview with Howard Samuel, but when Howard and I visited Oslo, we were taken on some visits and we were very much impressed by Dodd's forceful attitude, because in his personal discussions Peter is very quiet and reserved, but [in more formal group meetings], he was very much leading the discussion, had some points he wanted to make, and made them very effectively and firmly.

HOLMES: I would second that. I had the same impression that, although he's quiet, he's forceful.

Q: He had, I know, some illness after that and had to leave Norway, and then later on he served in Washington and went out to Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan. I think he's just retiring from Japan right about now, so he's had an illustrious career.

HOLMES: Yes, he has.

Q: Well, going on to John Doherty, he had two European assignments. Of course, you served with John for a long time in ILAB before he joined the Foreign Service.

HOLMES: Right.

Q: So you know John from Washington as well as the field.

HOLMES: Right. He was at USEC, and what was his other European assignment?

Q: Portugal.

HOLMES: Portugal. I never visited him in Portugal, but I certainly remember visiting him in USEC. He, of course, had a great trade union background, so he was really wired in with all the international organizations. Although John was a supporter of trade unions, he never was uncritical. He used his own judgment, and I think he was a more effective officer for it. He did not necessarily always agree with the AFL-CIO version of the international trade union movement.

Q: I see Jim Shea has done an interview with John Doherty [for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project], so I trust they covered many of the other incidents that we're familiar with about Mexico, for example, and Argentina and the more colorful dealings.

HOLMES: All I have on that is secondhand.

Q: Now in Lisbon, as I recall, he took an assignment which was somewhat under his grade, although later events boosted the importance of Portugal when the long-time, military government of Salazar was overthrown, but as I recall, the reason he went to Portugal and some of these other places was due to the size of his family. There was a problem at one point housing John with his ten dependent children.

HOLMES: That's right. You're correct.

Q: So partly he went to Portugal for that reason, I believe. Anyway, I would say, from my observation of John, not directly as the area advisor in the area he served but as Foreign Service [Coordinator], he was a very effective labor attaché and had good contacts. I don't know on the reporting side how much reporting he did, but the personal contact, I'm sure, was good.

HOLMES: Oh, his reporting was more than adequate. It wasn't just reporting. It also was good analysis.

Q: Now, Cliff Finch.

HOLMES: I really have nothing to say.

Q: Finch was in Spain in 1962 in your area, but you didn't see much from Finch?

HOLMES: Very little.

Q: I don't know if he's doing an interview here or not, but there was a big incident when Cliff was labor attaché in Egypt, which we ought to mention here if it hasn't been discussed elsewhere. This was during the days when Abdul Nasser was just taking over. Cliff went to a meeting of Egyptian trade union leaders, and afterwards he was assaulted and roughed up and robbed, and he went to the police chief to report this incident. They were taking notes and so on, and he said, "They stole my watch," and the police chief said, "What, they stole your watch!" He seemed to be surprised at this. So the idea was

that Nasser was trying to cut off all ties of labor with any outside people like the U.S. Government and other people. Well, we're going to stop now, and we'll resume later.

Now, we're back on line with Gerry Holmes, and I'm Harold Davey. We have finished discussing Cliff Finch, and the next person on the list is John Grimes. Now let's see.

HOLMES: He was assistant in France and then labor attaché in Belgium.

Q: All right, what do you recall about John?

HOLMES: Mostly his piano-playing wife.

Q: All right, anything else?

HOLMES: Not particularly.

Q: Wasn't John in Tunis at one point?

HOLMES: John was in Trinidad and Tobago, France, Zaire, Belgium, Tunisia, and France.

Q: All right, well, we'll go on from John Grimes to Bob Hare, Charles Robert Hare. Gerry, I know he used to work with you here in ILAB.

HOLMES: We used to work together in the same office. He had problems in Belgium, I gather. I don't know what the problems were exactly.

Q: Belgium, I see, was his fourth labor attaché assignment starting in 1974.

HOLMES: Right, and he had some problems within the embassy which I don't really know of. He also had some personal problems. I think this is one episode why his promotion was kind of delayed by several years, because the Foreign Service unfortunately writes these things in indelible ink and people have terribly long memories. Then, of course, he went on to the Barbados, which was somewhat below his then grade.

Q: Now before Barbados I notice he went to Geneva. Did you have any contact with him there?

HOLMES: No, not really.

Q: With the ILO, and then Barbados and, as you say, a little bit below his rank. Then he went to Spain, which was also somewhat below his rank probably. Did you have any contact with him in Spain?

HOLMES: I read his reporting, and I occasionally talked to him, but I didn't visit him

while he was in Spain.

Q: There were no big issues there that came up while he was in Spain?

HOLMES: Not particularly.

Q: I guess that had happened earlier. Now, what about Italy in 1992?

HOLMES: I was gone.

Q: You had retired by then?

HOLMES: Right.

Q: Well, let's go on to John LaMazza, who served in Europe, I believe, while you were working on Europe.

HOLMES: John was in Spain, I remember.

Q: Spain in 1980, and then Canada in 1992, but you were gone by the time he got to Canada. So the only European assignment he had while you were here was Spain in 1980 to 1984. Were there any issues that came up?

HOLMES: I was in Spain a couple times. I thought he was very well wired in and he wasn't having any problems. I don't remember any particular crises in Spain at that time. The one thing I remember was that his wife very much wanted to come home, and then the next thing I knew his next assignment was in Argentina and his wife was in Fairfax County. I don't know where that went.

Q: John was quiet at a number of labor attaché conferences I went to. He was so quiet at one of them Jim Taylor thought he should have made more of a contribution, but I understand reading some of his reports that he was an excellent writer, that LaMazza's prose and analysis were very good. Do you recall that in his reporting from Spain?

HOLMES: Well, it was good, but I think by and large most Foreign Service officers write very well, and I don't think that his writing stands out in my mind particularly.

Q: Okay, let's talk about John Gwynn. He only had four labor attaché assignments overseas, but he had many labor jobs here in Washington.

HOLMES: I saw him in Spain.

Q: Yes, Spain.

HOLMES: The first time I saw him, I guess Franco was still in power, and he seemed

extremely well wired in. I remember we had lunch with someone from the opposition who had just gotten out of jail, and I also remember that some people who would not visit John in the embassy would come to his house in the evening. For instance, I remember a meeting we had with one of the metal workers. John also seemed to be on good terms with everyone in the embassy, at a time when dealing with the opposition was a somewhat sensitive task.

Q: Yes, because Franco was still in power.

HOLMES: Correct, John really knew Spain well. I guess he was born in Barcelona. John was somewhat deceptive. He tended to be somewhat quiet, but I think he was a very effective officer. I'm also somewhat familiar with the work he did when he was assigned to USIA here in Washington.

Q: That's right.

HOLMES: He really set up what was the first go-round on [the AFL-CIO] Free Trade Union Institute, and he got some money for the Iberian Peninsula when that was opening up. So I think he was a very effective officer.

Q: I see he went to Portugal in 1979 as labor attaché. Do you recall anything during that period?

HOLMES: No, not particularly. I don't remember visiting him ever, and I don't remember anything in particular about his assignment there, to be honest with you.

Q: Do you have another one on your list that you want to comment on before we get down to Irwin Lippe?

HOLMES: Well, I just thought that Bill Harbin did a very creditable job in Italy. I also think that he did a very good job when he was regional officer in Central America, and I think he got penalized there because he was working for an ambassador who resented his regional responsibilities, and this accounts for the fact that he was somewhat held back career-wise. He then got two rapid promotions which kind of repaired part of the damage. I think this was an instance of an officer being penalized for his regional responsibility by an ambassador who wanted to hog his time. That's all I have to say about that.

Q: Well, that's an interesting comment on the problems of a regional officer.

HOLMES: Well, fortunately I was able to explain this to the selection board.

Q: With regard to Canada in 1981, Italy in 1989?

HOLMES: I think it's difficult to make something out of the job in Canada, because the trade unions are so close. But I thought he did a great job, and the embassy obviously

thought so too, because I'm sure in part the recommendations he got from his immediate superior and the ambassador accounted for his getting promoted after he got out of Canada.

Q: Now, he was assigned to Italy in 1989. Do you recall anything about that assignment?

HOLMES: I thought his reporting was excellent. He seemed to have no problems within the embassy that I was aware of. I thought everything was very timely.

Q: I think in Italy he had one of the assignments a labor attaché gets in a large country with a lot of high-level travel, the care and feeding of Secretaries of Labor. As I recall, he was particularly well appreciated by the entourage of a couple of Secretaries for his helpfulness in arranging programs. Of course, this is a no-win situation. If you foul up with the Secretary of Labor, then you're hurt; and if you do well, you're expected to do well.

HOLMES: Yes, except that I would just say that he found himself having to service some very demanding Secretaries of Labor.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Not to say irrationally demanding.

Q: To escape unscathed from that was an accomplishment. So who next on your list do you want to comment on?

HOLMES: Hilburn went to USEC just about the time I was leaving, but I have always been very impressed by him. I thought his assignment to the embassy in Belgium was clearly well below his capacity.

Q: But that was sort of a grooming to be the Brussels USEC labor attaché later on, about the time you left.

HOLMES: I know that his assignment in Geneva was exceedingly successful, because I remember talking to our various colleagues who dealt with the International Labor Organization, and they couldn't have been more enthusiastic about his abilities. They were very upset that he did not get promoted. All the people who dealt with him in Geneva were very complimentary.

Q: Okay, who is next?

HOLMES: Well, there's just one funny thing I'll say about Immerman.

Q: Bob Immerman.

HOLMES: I arrived in Tokyo--and, as you know, that's a long, long flight--and I had a cold and I was thoroughly exhausted. Bob Immerman, who, of course, is an old Japanese hand, insisted on taking me out for supper and spending something like four hours briefing me, and I was ready to drop.

Q: After a time change and everything else plus a cold.

HOLMES: He, however, did arrange for us--Ed McHale was in Japan at the same time-to stay in a Japanese inn in Kyoto since he had rat lines all over. I guess he even had hopes of coming back to Tokyo as a DCM, which never panned out. But he was very much identified with Japan. He was one of those one-country officers.

Q: And, of course, he was extremely fluent in Japanese.

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: Okay, who next do you have?

HOLMES: Well, I visited Alden Irons in Finland. This was way back in the early 1970s. I can't remember anything worthwhile about that frankly.

Q: Well, Emil Lindahl was in Canada in 1979, I see, although most of his career was in Asia. Do you have anything to say about Emil?

HOLMES: No, I think Canada frankly was often used as a parking site for people about to retire.

Q: I think maybe we should mention here, because it reflects on the role of labor attaché, that when the Prime Minister of Australia came to the United States some years later and Emil was very sick and had retired down in Florida . . .

HOLMES: It was Bob Hawke, correct?

Q: Bob Hawke, and there was a phone call to Emil in Florida, his wife picked up and the voice on the other side said, "This is Bob Hawke," and she said, "Yes, and this is Maggie Thatcher." But it turned out that it really was Bob Hawke, so he had a long chat with Emil. In fact, Emil sent me a letter about this. Hawke took time out, and Emil said, "Well, aren't you very busy?" "Well, yes, but it's just the head of the Federal Reserve Bank, and he can wait. This is more important." So here was a case of a labor attaché in Australia who made such an impression on a trade union leader who later became prime minister, that he took time out of his very busy schedule in Washington to call. So I think that's an indication of the effectiveness of labor attachés at their best.

Now, Irvin Lippe had assignments in Belgium in 1958, Geneva in 1962, France in 1966, and the U.K. in 1969. You were working on Europe most of those years.

HOLMES: And to be honest with you, I don't remember anything very striking about Irvin.

Q: No big issues at the time.

HOLMES: I suppose one shouldn't say anything if one can't say anything nice, so I shouldn't say anything about Mr. Longmyer's assignment in Sweden.

Q: Well, we'll move on. Do you see anyone on the list you want to mention?

HOLMES: Well, there's Jim Mattson, of course.

Q: Okay, Jim Mattson.

HOLMES: Who for a while worked here in the Labor Department.

Q: Yes, he was the area advisor for NEA.

HOLMES: I visited him both in Germany and in Belgium. I had the impression he really had the ambassador's ear at USEC. He certainly knew his way around the international trade union organizations. I think his reporting was superior. I think the same thing was basically true in Germany.

Q: I think it should be noted when Gerry says that Mattson's reporting on the international trade union affairs was superior, it's no small praise, since Gerry has worked in that area for about three decades and knows everybody there, so that's a strong accolade for Jim Mattson, who in my own opinion is one of the most effective labor attachés we've ever had in the Foreign Service.

HOLMES: Jim is another one of these fellows who is somewhat deceptively quiet but who has a great deal to offer.

Q: I see Graham McKelvey's name there.

HOLMES: Right. I have one interesting story about Graham McKelvey. I knew him, of course, when he was working here in the State Department, and he was a buddy of Phil Delaney's, and I often felt that, well, the reason he was over there was because he was a buddy of Phil Delaney's, because I felt that he really didn't have much to offer. But I came after he had been transferred to Brussels. I visited him in the embassy the first day I was in town, and Graham McKelvey sat back in his chair, put his feet on his desk, and gave me one of the best rundowns on the then state of the international trade union movement that anyone has ever given me.

Q: Well, again, as I said about Mattson, praise by Gerry Holmes on international trade

union reporting is no small accolade. Anything else on Graham McKelvey? He was in Germany, I guess, when you first came into ILAB perhaps.

HOLMES: Well, yes, I don't remember that at all. I visited Bill Meagher in Germany, but at that point, he already knew that his assignment was aborted for family reasons. My impression is that he knew everybody who was to be known. He was obviously well wired in with the trade union movement and Labor Ministry, and I think if he would have stayed, he would have made a very successful labor counselor in Bonn.

Q: What about his assignment in Turkey? Do you have any comments on that?

HOLMES: Well, the trouble with him in Turkey was that very often he was more of a political officer than a labor officer, and of course, he eventually went on to become a political officer. He obviously knew the language, and I'm not saying he didn't know the labor scene inside out. The problem was he didn't always report on it. So I think he knew a great deal more than he reported.

Q: I visited Turkey on a trade fair one time shortly after he had arrived, and he had only been in Turkey a few months but he was already fluent enough in terms of his language facility. I recall when he was recruited from the Federal Mediation Service. . .

HOLMES: He had been in Turkey on ICA assignment.

Q: He had been assigned to Turkey. Before he went to Turkey on the ICA assignment, he had gone out for Jim Taylor on a DOLITAC assignment there, but when he was recruited for that one, he learned his Turkish in Detroit before he even left. It was that time, I guess, I saw him, and he could speak Turkish only a couple months after arriving.

HOLMES: One problem I've never quite forgiven Bill for, although I like him, was that when he returned to the embassy as political officer, I don't know what happened, but the embassy reporting on labor for a couple of years just went to pot. I would have liked to think that as a former labor attaché he would have done more to insure labor reporting, but I guess the ambassador, who was Strausz-Hupé. . .

Q: Strausz-Hupé.

HOLMES: Strausz-Hupé had his own priorities and Bill worked for the ambassador.

Q: Well, during the time...

HOLMES: I don't understand, because Strausz-Hupé was basically supportive of labor. He had a good relationship with the AFL-CIO.

Q: During the time Bill Meagher was doing labor work the first time, before the period you talked about when he was political officer, I recall Ambassador Strausz-Hupé really

appreciated [Bill's work], because Turkey's trade union federation was having trouble with the ICFTU and was being suspended. The Ambassador was trying his best through the ICFTU and cables to our USEC Embassy in Brussels to put the best case forward for Turkey and for the Turkish Confederation of Labor. That was a time when they were very close together. Since Bill was a lateral-entry labor attaché, the fact that he was able to do well as a labor officer and then as a political officer showed the broadness of some of our labor officers. As I recall Ambassador Strausz-Hupé nominated Bill for the Murphy Award, a reporting award, over the political and economic officers at the post. So here was a lateral-entry labor attaché who got nominated by the ambassador.

HOLMES: The fellow is obviously a linguist. When he came here, he got the ARA slot, and I met him at FMCS something like six weeks after he started on the job, and he was rattling off Spanish.

Q: Bill had taken a reduction in grade. He had first been promised a senior Foreign Service position in Ankara, Turkey, by a senior personnel official in the State Department but then along the way State Department personnel discovered that the job he was going to in Turkey was not a senior job but something like the equivalent of a GS15, and that's all they could give him then. Although he had permission from the head of FMCS for re-employment rights when he applied for this job and got a letter of acceptance from State Department, along the way there was a change in the director of FMCS and the new director sent him a letter that said, "I do not honor that agreement." Now Bill still went ahead, both with a job below his grade and bareback in effect, that is with no re-employment rights, although he might have been able to contest it since he had an earlier letter. Fortunately for Bill and for labor attachés in the Foreign Service, he did get promoted based on this other record we've been talking about--this is great labor political work--and got his status then when he was promoted into the senior Foreign Service. So it worked out well for Bill Meagher. All right, now, Gerry, who?

HOLMES: Art Meyerson.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Only a couple of things: First of all, I knew him from college. We went to George Washington University graduate school together. Secondly, he was very bright. I think he was primarily an economist. He did all right in USEC, and I'm sure he went on to great things.

Q: He was the assistant labor attaché in USEC.

HOLMES: Yes. I don't really remember anything in particular about Bruce Millen except his reporting from Turkey was nothing spectacular. I remember Joe Mintzes when he was area advisor in State. He was both in State and in France and an exceedingly thoughtful and very good analyst. That's about all I can say. A very considerate man.

Q: Back to Millen, I'm sure he's covered this in his own oral history, but in his assignment as assistant labor attaché in Italy in 1951, he had a big dispute with the labor counselor over contacts with the Italian trade union movement. He was serving under Colonel Thomas Lane. Bruce was on the losing edge of that, because he was the more junior officer, and it may have affected his career for a while, his advocacy of broader contacts on the part of the embassy, but he went on to have an excellent career in the Foreign Service despite some problems along the way career-wise.

HOLMES: Colonel Lane, of course, was a pretty imposing figure, physically and just generally speaking.

Q: Colonel Lane had been there in the early occupation days and was well known. Jim Taylor used to tell the story about how all of the Italian trade unionists were beholden to him to get a pass to get out of town. After the war, they remembered him, and he had great contacts. All right, who's next on your list?

HOLMES: Well, there's Jack Muth, whom I remember both from France and from USEC. Jack, of course, is just about the only one who's left in the Labor Attaché Corps who was recruited from the trade unions. So he was always very closely wired in, I think, with George Meany and the boys. But aside from that, both in France and in USEC, he was very well wired in. I can't think of any specific incident that would shed any particular light on anything here.

Q: I think Jack had the unfortunate situation of following Jim Mattson in Brussels USEC, and Jim Mattson was a rather prolific reporter. So it made it a little difficult, although Muth obviously had the knowledge and the contacts.

HOLMES: Yes, and Muth did not neglect reporting.

Q: No, but just by comparison.

HOLMES: Well, I think in general Mattson is a more active person than Muth, and maybe that was reflected in the reporting. I'm sure there was as much going on when Jack was in town as when Jim was in town, but Jim just was more involved in things.

Q: Well, I see Ernie Nagy on the list. He had several European assignments. In fact, all of his labor assignments were in Europe.

HOLMES: I remember Ernie. I can't remember much about him in Germany. I'm not sure he wasn't an assistant there.

Q: Yes, I think he was. I think he was in Berlin as assistant labor attaché.

HOLMES: That's right. He was in Berlin when Kennedy went there. I remember when he first went out to Denmark in 1966 and I briefed him, and I was somewhat unfavorably

impressed by his constant references to Jay Lovestone and all the great things that Jay Lovestone was going to do for him including, when he got through in Copenhagen, Lovestone was going to make sure that he got to Bonn. In any event, Ernie Nagy never did get to Bonn. I was with Secretary Uesry when he called on Rome, and Ernie Nagy obviously was well prepared for this whole visit and very well organized and even had his neighbors in to meet the Secretary in his lovely rooftop apartment. He had a rooftop apartment overlooking the whole city that was pretty impressive. I also met Ernie in the United Kingdom at a stage when he was pretty much disenchanting and the handwriting was on the wall that he wasn't going to be putting up with this treatment any longer. He obviously had difficulties within the embassy in getting proper recognition. I have no sense as to what the cause of this was or who, if anybody, was responsible for it, but, of course, he's one of the few people who went to London and then quit.

Q: One comment on Ernie Nagy: He was one of the labor officers who was primarily a political officer with some labor qualifications, and he would come in and out of labor work when there were assignments that he was qualified for, but I think he was viewed as a very broad labor officer like some others we've talked about. So that was a factor in his assignment to London in 1984, as I recall.

HOLMES: I am looking at Pfothenauer. He was in Austria in 1984.

Q: Okay.

HOLMES: All I will say is that I think he was assigned there because his spouse was assigned to the U.S. Mission and better no labor attaché than David Pfothenauer. I think his heart was not in it. He obviously wished he had been somewhere else.

Q: Right.

HOLMES: Then we get to Margaret Plunkett.

Q: Yes, that's right, Margaret Plunkett.

HOLMES: I knew Margaret, of course, because she worked here in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But Margaret in her first assignment in the Netherlands only proved how wrong I could be, because I told everybody within earshot that sending a woman to the Netherlands was terrible. They had this Teutonic concept that women should go to church, school, and take care of the kids. But anyhow, I went to Holland, and she had everybody including the trade unionists eating out of her hand. I got any number of unsolicited favorable comments from the trade unionists about Margaret. It turned out Margaret's biggest problem was the fact she was in an embassy in which her political superior, Dan Horowitz, was a former labor attaché, something that often brings grief to labor attachés. But she was exceedingly successful, and, of course, you know more than I do about her work in Israel.

Q: One incident about the Netherlands I recall. In her debriefing here, she said that people thought it would be difficult for her to take trade union leaders in the Netherlands and other contacts out to buy them lunch or dinner, something like that, but she found there was no problem whatsoever. They let her pick up the check. This supposed male sensitivity didn't exist.

HOLMES: No, I couldn't have been more off base on this.

Q: Now, in Israel she did an outstanding job there. Her contact in the Labor Ministry most of the time was Golda Meir. Anyway, when Golda Meir went on to be Prime Minister, Margaret Plunkett was in very good position as her main contact and moved up, and she utilized that very well. She was very well liked in Israel and did a fantastic job while she was there.

Now we've got Harry Pollak, right, in London. He comes right after Plunkett on the list.

HOLMES: Harry, of course, is another one of those people who was very close to the trade union movement. I remember one day I was in London and he was moaning and complaining about the fact that he'd lost touch with what was going on in the United States and that his friends in the trade union movement weren't keeping him informed. Mind you, this is London, and God knows how many visitors come and go. So, as I was leaving the office, I patted a big stack of seven or eight unopened [Labor Department information] packets and said, "Well, you know, if you open these, you might get a better feel for what's going on at home."

Q: Good for you, Gerry.

HOLMES: Harry Pollak also took me to a press conference where somebody by the name of Thatcher was speaking.

Q: Margaret Thatcher?

HOLMES: Yes, that was the Margaret Thatcher, but at that time she was in the opposition. This was when the labor government was still in power. The lady gave a very interesting speech, and it was very nice of Harry to take me.

Q: Was it during his incumbency when Horowitz and company went around to various posts to discuss possible U.S. withdrawal from the ILO, or did that come later?

HOLMES: I think that was later.

Q: Okay, now I know you were a little disappointed with Harry when he came to Washington as the Deputy S/IL and then S/IL, because when he had been in Belgium and U.K., he was extremely helpful to Labor Department people who had passed through. But when he got to Washington, he became very bureaucratic about roles and he tried to cut

the Labor Department out of the voice we had before.

HOLMES: Maybe he was reflecting the AFL-CIO.

Q: Well, but there were different personalities. Other people had that job. Whatever he did, he took that position. I remember we had a labor attaché conference in New Delhi when Howard Samuel and he were there as co-chairmen. Harry wanted to do all the inviting including the ambassador from Beijing, the former president of the UAW, and other things, so that part was disappointing although he had done an outstanding job for us as labor attaché in Belgium and the U.K. from all the reports I got.

All right, Dale Povenmire?

HOLMES: I visited Dale Povenmire in Portugal. I am also aware of some of his work here as ARA advisor. Dale took me around parts of Portugal, and he seemed very well wired in. He was, I think, a very thoughtful kind of guy. I don't recall any particular incidents that could throw a light on some aspect of labor issues. Of course, this was a team, because his wife was a consular officer.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: They had a beautiful house.

Q: And went to Italy too. Did you visit him in Italy?

HOLMES: I didn't visit him in Italy, but his reporting certainly was superior.

Q: Yes, I understand he did an excellent job.

HOLMES: He's a very thoughtful fellow. He retired actually when he was in Rome.

Q: I think there was a little difficulty between him and the assistant labor attaché at that time.

HOLMES: Yes, there was.

Q: The assistant had a lot of personal contacts with a lot of people.

HOLMES: Well, it may have been a matter of Povenmire trying to assert himself, and the assistant was a fellow who had a lot of rat lines out and had been there for a long time. There's always a bit of a problem when you have an assistant who is, how shall we say, well entrenched because he's been there for some time, and he gets a new labor counselor, labor attaché, whom from his point of view, he has to break in, and he may resent it. I suspect Dale is one of those fellows.

Q: I was thinking of the assistant labor attaché at the time in Italy.

HOLMES: You mean the American assistant?

Q: Yes. John Fernandez.

HOLMES: Oh, well, John Fernandez. Povenmire and Fernandez had very different personalities.

Q: There were some difficulties between the two.

HOLMES: I take it back now. I certainly visited Rome when John Fernandez was there. John Fernandez was one of those people who was somewhat unorthodox. He obviously had a great many friends. He obviously knew a lot of Italians. He had a huge apartment off the Piazza Navarona, and he also had friends in other parts of the embassy like administration, budget, and what have you. But Fernandez liked to do his own thing. I don't think he suffered superiors gladly, never mind where he was. He went on to Finland after that?

Q: Yes, he did.

HOLMES: I have the impression there were some problems there too.

Q: Well, anyway, your visit may have been when Jim Shea was there. Maybe Povenmire had already gone. I see there was an overlap. Anyway, who is the next person on your list? How about Hugh Reichard?

HOLMES: I really don't know much about Reichard, because he only had one assignment [in Europe]. I knew Reichard mostly from his assignment in ILAB.

Q: Who's the next one?

HOLMES: Well, I knew Irwin Rubenstein, but he never worked in Europe.

Q: We have Bob Senser somewhere on the list and Roger Schrader.

HOLMES: Roger Schrader reminds me of something, and Roger's as good a hook to hang this on as any. I find that some labor attachés were more successful in working with USIA than others. The reason I'm saying this is that this seems to be a function of the labor attaché rather than the post, because some people, like Roger Schrader, wherever they went they made good use and exploited USIA in terms of publications. I don't know what it was. I guess partly it's his personality, and in part it's just being aware of it, but in both Bonn and London and, from what I've learned from other sources, also in New Zealand, he made very effective use of USIA. I first met Roger when he was working in Geneva, and he had been there only six months when I arrived as U.S. delegate to the ILO 9th

Metal Trades Committee Meeting, but he helped steer me. In those six months he had already learned a lot of the ropes, and he helped steer me through the maze rather successfully. One recommendation that Roger and I both made to Washington was that the U.S. delegation should always have one person who was permanently going to all the industrial relations committee meetings, so that we would have one guy who knew the ropes of the mechanics of administration. On my delegation we had two neophytes. I guess we subsequently did that in terms of picking Barbara Dunkak.

Q: You know, I first met Roger when he came through Southampton to a German assignment, and I used to go down and meet the ships as they stopped over before they went to Germany. He and his wife were on one of those ships. I had them out to our house. That goes back to 1956 or 1957.

HOLMES: I met him in 1963 in Dusseldorf when he was there.

Q: He was going to Dusseldorf, I think, at the time, or another German post. How about Dick Searing?

HOLMES: I think Searing was an assistant in France, but I don't remember too much about him.

Q: Then, Bob Senser, who was Belgium in 1962 as assistant labor attaché, then Belgium USEC in 1976, and Germany.

HOLMES: I remember him both in USEC and in Germany in 1981. Bob has the advantage of being a journalist, so he writes very well.

Q: I was going to say that.

HOLMES: His reporting is very impressive. He certainly knows his way around the trade union movement. He also has a sensitivity for those in society who are less well off than others, so he was a really good match for labor a attaché who sometimes has to look after the downtrodden. Yet at the same time he was obviously on very good terms with the DCM and the ambassador. He was also one of the first labor attachés to live, so to speak, off base. He did not live in Plittersdorf, which was the American enclave, where Herb Baker, for instance, lived. Both he and Roger Schrader moved out into the economy, which I think makes for a more effective labor attaché.

Q: When he was leaving Germany, there came a point when, because of age--I think he had reached the age when he was supposed to retire--there was an effort [to keep him on]. I believe Lane Kirkland sent a letter to the Secretary of State requesting that he be extended for a year, which the Director General had the authority to do, but for some reason the State Department played hardball and did not grant him the extra year. I later thought this might have been a ploy to open up a spot to kick John Warnock out there. They needed a place. In fact, they had tentatively assigned Warnock there to get him out

of the S/IL job. He couldn't take the job because he had a daughter who was a senior in high school [in the Washington, D.C., area] so he went to Japanese language training en route to Tokyo instead. But for whatever reason, Bob Senser could have stayed one more year, and I was amazed that, [given] the letter from Lane Kirkland to the State Department, they didn't honor that request in the case of Bob Senser.

HOLMES: The problem was Bob Senser got caught in the 65 [age] ceiling before they changed it.

Q: Yes, but they had a grace [period of] up to a year.

Now, Jim Shea. We've all had a lot of contact with Jim including several tours in Europe, like Spain in 1984 and Italy in 1986.

HOLMES: We all know that Jim is a great fellow who really managed to get along on human terms. I think the problem with Jim was that he can find out all sorts of things and learn all sorts of things, but then it comes to reporting. I think his reporting at the end of his career was much better than at the beginning. But reporting has just basically been Jim's Achilles heel.

Q: I think that Jim was fortunate some places to have an assistant or some other officer to help him on the reporting. I think in Argentina in 1965 that Tony Freeman might have been there to help him do some reporting.

HOLMES: Without revealing my sources, I talked to somebody who was at the embassy at that time, who said Jim was a great fellow but somebody else wrote his reports.

Q: Yes, I wouldn't be surprised. Well, today we could call it good delegation, but whatever...

HOLMES: It was not an assistant labor attaché.

Q: I think Jim's ability to make contacts, as we both know, is formidable.

HOLMES: Oh, yes, very impressive.

Q: And through his extensive knowledge of sports, for one area, he really established rapport with the local Australian soccer league or in South America whatever, and he has a phenomenal memory for those sports. People in countries like Brazil which Jim had left would come to Washington and be asked, "Do you know any labor attachés?" "Oh, yes, Jim Shea," and it might have been 15 years since Jim had left. I imagine in his own oral history Jim has mentioned that Bob Hawke invited him to a big retirement party up in his hotel room. They invited just a select few, including Jim Shea, which was quite a tribute to Jim.

HOLMES: That's the sort of fellow Jim Shea is. Once you meet him, you don't forget him. That's for sure. He's also out of the trade union movement.

Then we come to Les Slezak, who was a saxophone player and who, you will be interested to know, is now taking up the saxophone again. I first met Les in Belgium. I was coming over from Poland. He certainly knew his way around Belgium. He had a very difficult time in Sweden, because that was during the Vietnam era and the Swedes were very unsympathetic to the Americans and his kids had trouble in school. Throughout this period, though, Les's reporting from Sweden was perfectly objective, and he just called it as he saw it. I don't remember too much about him in the United Kingdom except that his reporting, I think, was outstanding. I remember once, and this was completely unsolicited, a long cable came in on the role of women in labor in the United Kingdom. It was a reporting classic. It was comprehensive; it was concise; and, as far as I know, it was unsolicited. But that was typical of Les.

Q: Anything more on Les Slezak?

HOLMES: I just think he's one of the better fellows we had in the corps, that's for sure.

Q: Who is the next one you have on your list?

HOLMES: Well, there's this fellow Larry Specht. I did know him. He wound up in Bonn because there was a slot that the State Department had allocated to the AFL-CIO. I was not impressed. I went to a meeting with the then labor attaché and a few people from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and one of the things that struck me was that considering the time he had spent on it, his language facility was pretty poor.

Q: Is John Stephens the next person you have? He didn't have much time in Europe.

HOLMES: No, Stephens, I think, was an assistant. I knew Tobias, but there is not much to be said about him. He was primarily political.

Q: Well, he was a clear Labor Department type, but he might have been political. What about anybody else on that page or the next page?

HOLMES: Well, then we get to Turnquist.

Q: Okay, let's discuss Dan Turnquist. He was in Sweden in 1978, France 1983, USEC 1987, and Bonn 1991.

HOLMES: Well, the thing that impresses one about Dan Turnquist is his unbounded enthusiasm regardless of where he is. While Dan obviously has a low quotient for language ability, he nevertheless launches in the language. The fact that, however broken it may be, he uses the language of the people to whom he is accredited so impresses these people usually that they are not offended by his mistakes. He fortunately is not put off by

the fact that he does make mistakes, unlike some other labor attachés who won't speak the language until they are perfect and as the result never speak it. Dan, of course, is very well attuned to the needs of the trade union movement as well State and Labor Departments. His reporting, I think, is definitely superior. He leaves no stone unturned, and I think he is probably, if I had to put my finger on it, the most enthusiastic, ebullient character in the Labor Attaché Corps. He just is bouncy, even now, I think.

Q: We should say his reporting is even more impressive considering the handicap he suffers with macular degeneration, and so he has a difficult time reading.

HOLMES: Well, he picks up a tremendous amount of information, and he also manages to get it into print.

Q: Well, I would amend what you say about his knowing the needs of the Labor Department. I found people coming back from a trip to Europe, like a high-level Labor Department person, if they've been to five countries and they had a good job done by everybody--let's say they've been to Stockholm--they would sing the praises of Dan Turnquist, because he really went out of his way to make their visit effective. I think he is probably the most effective labor attaché, certainly one of the most effective, top two or three, that I've come across overall, and his service over in State Department as the deputy to John Warnock was extremely helpful to the Labor Department and the labor corps. I'm just sorry that they didn't bring him back to make him the head of S/IL a year or two ago. All right, do you know any more about Turnquist you want to say?

HOLMES: No.

Q: We are the Turnquist fan club.

HOLMES: That's right, definitely.

Q: Charter member.

HOLMES: Absolutely. I just admire the energy that this fellow brings to bear.

Q: Anybody can't be all wrong whose uncle is from Malcolm, Nebraska, my hometown, population 100.

HOLMES: And yet, you know, in spite of this fellow always being on the run, there isn't anything compulsive about him. It just comes across that he's enthusiastic about what he's doing. When you go there, you know you're going to have a full program.

Ulriksson I just barely knew. He was there during my first visit in Germany, and I guess Woltman was the assistant.

Q: Was he the assistant then?

HOLMES: Either Woltman or Sullivan, I can't remember. Anyhow, Ulriksson obviously was one of those old trade unionists who had been in Sweden and spent a lot of his time while I was visiting him in Germany talking about his lovely assignment in Sweden.

Q: Apparently it was Sullivan from the dates here.

HOLMES: The interesting thing about Sullivan is that I had met him here in Washington before he went over and I arrived something like less than a week after he arrived in Bonn. He had just married, and he had his bride with him, and they were living someplace where they had nothing but orange crates as furniture, but they insisted on having me over for dinner.

Q: This is Ken Sullivan, who was assistant labor attaché in Germany in 1963 and then labor attaché in Austria in 1967. After Ulriksson, we come to John Warnock.

HOLMES: I don't remember too much about John in Denmark except that his reporting was obviously very good. I visited him in France. John, although he was not out of the trade union movement, was one of those fellows who was very much attuned to the Communist menace. He sometimes saw evil where some of us found it difficult to see, but anyhow he was one of these people who was exceedingly thorough in what he did. His reporting certainly was very good. As far as I know, he had no problems with the embassy. I had the impression he was well wired in. He once sent me to an economic briefing in Paris which turned out to be by an officer from the Treasury. It was one of the best economic briefings I ever got. He was obviously wired in with the agency people. I think his reporting was all you could have asked for. I don't remember anything particularly striking about John either in Germany or the United Kingdom except that he continued to do outstanding work and seemed to get along with everybody up to that point. His troubles started later in Washington.

Q: Yes, one of the problems was that he was such a strong advocate for the labor attaché program that it apparently got him kicked out of his job.

HOLMES: Well, we could argue about that, I think. The handwriting for John Warnock was on the wall when Jesse Clear got the EUR labor advisor's slot.

Q: Against John's wishes.

HOLMES: At that point he knew that he and Irving Brown were not seeing eye to eye.

Q: Anything more on John Warnock?

HOLMES: No.

Q: Well, let's see. Is Herb Weiner the next one on your list?

HOLMES: Oh, Herb.

Q: The United Kingdom in 1977. His other experience overseas was not in your area.

HOLMES: I knew that whenever I called Herb in the United Kingdom and I couldn't get through because he was on a long phone conversation, that Dan Goott was at the other end. No, Herb was a superior officer. I was once there at a Labor Day reception at the ambassador's residence, and I don't think there was a single labor leader in Great Britain of any importance at all who was not at that reception. They obviously were thinking exceedingly highly of Herb. I know that Herb is still in touch with some of these people even today.

Q: Yes, he is. I've seen evidence of that.

HOLMES: His rapport with his people was extraordinary. The only other thing I'll say about Herb is that he's a terrible driver. Never go through London with him at the wheel.

Q: Let's see. Lloyd White was a little before your time.

HOLMES: Yes, I know who he was but. . .

Q: What about Arlen Wilson? He was in Canada in 1988 and in Spain in 1992? You retired about the time he went to Spain.

HOLMES: Well, he went to Spain hoping to get Italy, but that never panned out. His reporting from Canada, but that's the nature of the job really, was primarily economic. He took very good care of visitors, and he was very good about picking up the phone and advising me of people who might be heading this way whom we should be aware of. Aside from being a good communicator, I can't say anything else.

Q: Well, Ed Woltman comes up next. You had a lot of contact with Ed.

HOLMES: I remember Ed both from Germany, where he was an assistant in 1967 and Denmark, when we had a labor attaché conference there. I also visited him another time, but I never visited him in Austria. He had some family problems in Austria. One of his kids was giving him trouble, I guess. But I thought Ed was a very thoughtful person. He always had very good relations with everybody in the embassy. I thought his reporting was timely. I can't think of any problems he had at the posts where I saw him. He was particularly well wired in in Bonn with the youth groups. I remember once going out with him one evening, and he obviously knew everybody who was significant in the youth movement.

Q: Wilbur Wright was in the Netherlands and Belgium in 1979.

HOLMES: I knew Wilbur here when he worked in the Labor Department. This was a time when they were having a big hassle about whether we should have a labor attaché in the Netherlands, and they moved him down to Brussels.

Q: Yes, because it was a sort of a regional job when it moved to Belgium or maybe to the Netherlands.

HOLMES: That's right. I don't know, I have the feeling Wilbur, for whatever reason, didn't ever quite get his feet on the ground as a labor attaché. I guess his subsequent assignments were over with USIA in Italy or something like that.

Q: Arnold Zempel. You had some contact with him?

HOLMES: Well, I know Arnold because he was running this shop when I joined it. I really have nothing I can say about his OECD assignment. I don't remember anything about it. I thought that Arnold was a very thoughtful person when he was here and that he somehow got railroaded out into the Labor Attaché Corps.

Q: Let's go back to the beginning of your list, since we started on those with five or more assignments and now we're picking up other people you might have known. Let's see if there's any you want to comment on that we haven't discussed.

HOLMES: Well, there's Harold Aisley, I suppose.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Who I remember from Denmark and Turkey. I thought he did a very workmanlike job. I know he had trouble in Turkey, particularly because of his spouse, because of the pollution.

Q: Oh, yes. I think courageously he took a second tour there even though she had health problems, and so he stayed on an extra tour.

HOLMES: George Anderson was a fellow unique unto himself. Maybe he should have been agricultural attaché, I don't know. The problem with George was he basically had no sympathy for labor, which was reflected both in his contacts when you went to visit him and also in his reporting. I remember visiting him once in Belgium and he was talking more about corporation and monopolies than he was talking about anything in the trade union movement. I'm not sure how much George Anderson knew about the ICFTU when he was accredited to Belgium. But still I had the feeling that he should really never have been a labor attaché.

Q: Another problem in Belgium: They made him the drug coordinator. At that time it was a very high item. He spent over half his time on drugs. He was in Austria when he offended a high official of the AFL-CIO, perhaps Lane Kirkland, who was then the

Secretary-Treasurer. Anderson made some comments that made the AFL-CIO leader think he was anti-labor.

HOLMES: This reminds me of Tom Bowie. Tom, of course, was a regular Foreign Service officer, and the reason he became so intimate with the AFL-CIO was that the first time after he arrived in Paris and George Meany came to Europe--this was still the age of the steamship--when George Meany debarked in France, who was at the bottom of the gangplank but Tom Bowie. Ever since then, the AFL-CIO had no problems with Tom Bowie. I remember first meeting Tom Bowie because he came over for a briefing on the French labor scene, and after I got through talking with him, I said to myself, my God, for the first time I am talking to somebody who knows less about labor in France than I do. But in both Rome and Paris, his reporting was superb; his entree in the trade union movement was flawless; and he certainly knew his way around Rome. He was one of those officers who was always at the bottom of the gangplank and who never left the airport until after the wheels were up, because he said, "Particularly in Rome, you have too many people coming back on you."

Q: Tom Bowie about set a record for Rome, about 11 years, I think, from 1961 to 1972.

HOLMES: That was because of his wife's illness.

Q: Well, partly because of his wife's illness. At one point he was going to come out. He had been there about nine years, and the Labor Department, George Weaver, nominated Lou Silverberg to go to Rome. George Meany didn't like George Weaver, and for that reason or for some other reason, did not want Lou Silverberg in Rome. So these were the days when relations with the Italian trade union movement were sensitive, so George Meany wrote to the ambassador in Italy and said, "Don't you think that Tom Bowie should be extended for another tour?" and the ambassador said, "Sure." So he was extended another two years, partly as a counter-proposal, a preemptive strike by George Meany, which is kind of illustrative of some of the questions the oral history program has on how labor assignments get made and what are the interests of the AFL-CIO.

HOLMES: Well, if you want to have an insight into how labor attaché assignments are made, another fellow you might look up is Jack Muth.

Q: Yes, we discussed him before but didn't get into that aspect of it.

HOLMES: No, we didn't. Quite clearly his career was influenced by his strong ties with the AFL-CIO.

Q: That certainly helped some labor attachés, but others had their careers hurt by their relations with AFL-CIO.

HOLMES: Or non-relations, yes.

Q: Going down the list of labor attachés, are there any we didn't talk about before that you want to comment on?

HOLMES: I thought John Becker always did a workmanlike job. It seemed to be the impression that while he was in India he had some kind of problem, but then if he did, you would know about it. I don't.

Q: I don't recall any particular problem he had in India, but he went to Austria and then Canada.

HOLMES: Well, another one of those Canada assignments and retirement, I suppose. At the time of the labor attaché conference in Vienna, I got the impression that he was very well wired in. His immediate superior, with whom he may have been on very good terms, turned out to be a dud, but that's another story.

Q: Anybody else on this page that we haven't discussed that you wish to comment on?

HOLMES: Well, there was Ellen Boneparth, who, I guess, was a product of trying to integrate women into the Foreign Service.

Q: This was Greece now.

HOLMES: Basically a women's libber. I think frankly she was more preoccupied with the role of women in society than she was with labor matters, which her reporting also reflected. I knew Brayshaw, but I [don't have anything to say about him]. I don't remember much about Tom Byrne when he was in London, to be honest with you.

Q: Tom Byrne. Well, I can recall that when he went on a lateral entry assignment to Ghana, his first assignment in the Foreign Service, he did such a good job there in Ghana that the African Bureau made him DCM in Dar Es Salaam. Then not long after, he was made labor attaché in London, and then he came back to Washington for a number of important labor assignments.

HOLMES: He was ambassador too.

Q: Yes, two times ambassador. One was in Norway and the other was in Prague. What's the next one, Gerry, you want to comment on?

HOLMES: I know all of these guys, but...

Q: Do you have anything particular to say about them?

HOLMES: Forrester was a lost cause in the OECD job. He tried to get another labor assignment but he didn't get it. I don't understand it. The guy came out of the trade union movement, but somehow he didn't make it. I know something about his consular

assignment in Malmo, but. . .

Q: Here's one I know that's on the following page, Dale Good, although he didn't have five assignments. He had four labor attaché assignments, Greece in 1952, Israel in 1957, Austria in 1964, Germany in 1968, in addition to being S/IL.

HOLMES: Well, he was one of those people who came out of the trade union movement. One of Dale's problems from where I sat was his relationship with the Labor Department. To what extent this was affected by 16th Street, I have no idea, but he always managed to kind of pooh-pooh the Labor Department.

Q: Well, I mentioned this maybe on the Howard Samuel tape, but I think with the Labor Department and him, Howard Samuel was so active in the Labor Department that Dale Good was in a difficult position vis-à-vis to retain his leadership, because that was the time also when ILAB had some funds and Howard Samuel wasn't averse to using them on projects from labor attaché conferences to foreign labor country digests and several other aspects. So he was very, very active, Howard was.

HOLMES: Maybe Dale resented this, but his labor reporting was good, and I don't really have any feel for his Austrian and German assignments particularly.

I remember Dan Goott because I visited him in France. I worked with him for a long time, because he was the EUR labor advisor in State. I don't know just why Dan Goott got himself transplanted to France, but Dan Goott was still taking language lessons when I visited him. Dan Goott was one of those officers who wouldn't speak the language until he was perfect in it. He was always afraid of making mistakes. So actually, although Dan Goott was the labor attaché in Paris, I found that he handed me over to Russ Heater, who at the time was the assistant labor attaché. I guess after he came back from France, Dan faded out.

Q: Well, let's see. Is there anybody else? I guess we covered most of those who served in Europe. Do you see anybody else you want to comment on that we haven't discussed?

HOLMES: Kaukonen was a pretty unorthodox officer.

Q: Jorma Kaukonen.

HOLMES: I remember his assignment in Sweden, not so much in Canada. He played a very active role.

Q: Well, I heard a story about him in Sweden that he learned cross-country skiing, or skiing of some kind, and placed in some national competition.

HOLMES: I wouldn't be surprised.

Q: Of course, Kaukonen is now more famous for being the father of a Jefferson Airplane guitar player. There was also a story about him when he was assigned to Manila as labor attaché. I don't know if it's true or not. There was a big AID labor mission there, and he had a staff meeting of all the people on the various staffs and said in effect, "I want you to know that I have forgotten more about Philippine labor than any of you will ever know." At least that's how it came over to the people who were there. Some said it was probably true, but it wasn't a particularly good way to get the cooperation of his staff.

Now, Gerry, you had some comments you wanted to make on some groups in the Labor Department.

HOLMES: I felt during my years in the Labor Department there were two groups who often did more harm than good to labor attachés. The first group was in the late 1950s and early 1960s which I refer to as the "right or wrong, my labor attaché" group. This group felt that if a labor attaché didn't get promoted, he was the victim of prejudice. Well, there certainly was plenty of reason for this paranoia, because in those days the Foreign Service was exceedingly elitist. Also, the Foreign Service has never resolved the conflict between generalists and specialists, and labor attachés always had the problem that, even if there wasn't a bias against labor, still there may be a bias against specialists. Now it so happens that not all labor attachés are perfect, and those of us who worked on selection boards knew that there was a very good reason why X didn't get promoted, and it was not the result of prejudice or anything else. The people in the Labor Department who kept pounding on this issue merely gave Labor Department representatives on the selection board the image of special pleaders.

I remember one instance of someone who doubled his income when he went into the Foreign Service. Either he was underpaid or something in his first job or he was overpaid in his second. The man simply was not Foreign Service material. When he did not get promoted, there were very good reasons. I think Labor Department people who kept insisting that all labor attachés were perfect did the Labor Attaché Corps a disservice.

The second group some later years consisted mostly of domestic officers in the Labor Department although, sad to say, sometimes also the head of ILAB. These people thought labor attachés had nothing better to do than sit abroad and wait for the Labor Department to ask for something, and when they didn't have it the next morning, they would pound the desk and scream about "What are our labor attachés doing?" Labor attachés had a lot of other duties besides labor. They were acting DCM's, acting political officers, and there were some good reasons why they couldn't produce something the next morning. This sort of talk led to "Well, let's take over our labor attachés." Of course, this was non-starter, because no Secretary of Labor really was interested in taking it over, and the Labor Department experience with the Saudi vocational training project would suggest that the Labor Department would have been incapable of administering the foreign labor attaché program in the first place. So I thought this was a non-starter. This particular group sometimes was reformed, because some of these domestic officers would go overseas and they would be received by labor attachés. A wonderful program was going

to be arranged for them. The visit was a great success, and no more was heard about “let's take over the labor attaché program.”

Q: I would say "Amen," Gerry. Those are very good comments, and thank you very much for your time.

End of interview