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(muffled)

Bill Thomas- This is Bill Thomas and we are in the offices today of Wooddale (muffled) August 7th and the interviewers are Henry Mitchell, and Bill Thomas. (Tape Break)

Harry Woodbury- Even think about writing (muffled)

Bill Thomas- Basically gather a historical and sometimes a historical record regardless of what happened.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) essential point of this is to get things not tape in the Memphis state world history department for the future after we are all dead, that is the essential.

Harry Woodbury- Well I am much in favor of that. What line of questioning do you want.

Bill Thomas- You want to begin Henry?

Henry Mitchell- No start your questioning.

Bill Thomas- Well here is what we usually do to relax and everything if you could just tell us briefly about yourself. When you came in the city and what your job is basically that.

Harry Woodbury- When I came into the city?

Bill Thomas- Yeah.

Harry Woodbury- Well I was born and bred in West Tennessee. Went to school, high school at a little place called Munford Tennessee. One year at the university of Tennessee junior college at Martin and 3 years at Memphis state where I took a degree. I did some graduate work in the university of Mississippi. Became interested in journalism in high school and all of this in college, earned money to put me through college working for the Commercial Appeal as a correspondent at Martin.

Bill Thomas- At Martin.

Harry Woodbury- At Martin and then let's see at Memphis State I worked in the office at the Commercial Appeal during that time. Also at Ole Miss where I did the graduate work after they had came up with a new manager for the Commercial Appeal in Jackson for a year and then came to Memphis and worked on the city desk for about a year was a, put on the city hall assignment handled that for about 12 years during the height and the decline of Mr. Crump's regime.

Bill Thomas- Can you tell us that period just for the record.

Harry Woodbury- That was about 1941 to 1953. At which time I left the newspaper field and went into advertising and other (muffled) as a partner in the firm, knowned as Archen Woodberry. I worked there for 15 years until last fall at which time I sold my interests and had intended to go into public relations counseling. Pretty highly professional way but instead I made the mistake of going by to see Henry Lobe and congratulate him on being elected mayor. He told me he was putting together a team to move into city hall and asked me if I would join him as one of his directors. I told him I would have to give that some thought because nothing was further from my mind but after a couple days of thinking about it I suppose that the, I must have had a latent desire to serve in government due tot eh experience I had around it while in the newspaper work. So I accepted and on January the 1st I joined him as a director of this division of public service.

Bill Thomas- Now will you tell us your title.

Harry Woodbury- I am director of the division of public service, one of four directors.

Bill Thomas- Alrighty (muffled) we are not sure what areas, what you know and so whatever you can best tell us would be helpful. But I think the purpose here and with a lot of the city officials that we talk to all the councilmen except one we have a scheduled interview with him, we are having a problem setting up a time. But mostly I believe that the purpose here is to try to recapture the mood and a little bit of understanding of the activity during this particular period which basically runs from February 12th when the strike started into April the assassination. Did this strike and news involve you in any direct way?

Harry Woodbury- Oh yes. I served on the mediation committee that was charged with the responsibility of talking with the union representatives to see if some sort of agreement could be worked out whereby we could settle the strike and get the men back to work. So I was in on that for several weeks. I suppose the main reason that I was assigned to it was because Mr. Blackburn whop was the director of the division of public works was so involved in the make shift arrangements for picking up the garbage that he couldn't do it.

Henry Mitchell- Did you (muffled) do you feel, will you tell us what you felt, what your opinion was, what your understanding was of the garbage strike. In this respect did you consider it purely a labor dispute that was in some way turned into something other beginning or will you tell us how you regarded that strike and the nature of the strike.

Harry Woodbury- Well yes. We came in here on January 1st ready to go and had the inauguration of the mayor with the auditorium and a new form of government was coming in. We were parties to it and we were all viewed fresh in our jobs and the mayor was the only one of his team that had any actual experience as an elected official having been a former mayor and a former commissioner and that sort of

thing. The council was new and we felt that we had a great opportunity and I still feel that about it, that it is a new day.

Bill Thomas- But it was enthusiastic?

=Very enthusiastic.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled)

Harry Woodbury- Right and the people had spoken, there was opposition of course but it was handled in a democratic way where people could have voted it down if they wanted but it was about the time of pretty good majority and a hard election. Anybody who wanted to run could run and did. Our man won, he was in the runoff. The old regime was told by a pretty good majority that the people wanted something else and they selected our person. We thought everything was ready to roll we knew from the very beginning it would have a lot of give and take a lot of learning to do, especially with a new form of government. A few precedents were available and really wasn't a great change in the physical make up of the government in the ordinances and the laws and that sort of thing they were the same but they were brought under this new legislative executive set up. So we thought that we were ready to go, you will have to recall I think the weather had a great deal to do with this. We came in on a very cold winter and Mr. Blackburn hadn't been in office, hadn't gotten into his office good before he had his crews out at night putting cinders on the streets.

I don't know what the record will show but I would think that 10 nights, 10 or 12 nights after the first two weeks he was in office he was on this emergency duty with a new group of people and he was new on the job and they were doing the job as best as they could and keeping traffic rolling, it was really rough. It was very rough all during January. Then the first, we knew that there was any rumblings in the sanitation department was following we had a little advance notice that early in February that the union man had paid a call on Mr. Blackburn and all that kind of stuff but then if you will recall they had a strike in New York and it was being settled about this time, it was real rough. Then a very unfortunate thing happened, two of the workers from the sanitation department were crushed to death in one of these packer trucks and I know the mayor was extremely concerned about it and so was Mr. Blackburn, there is no resources available to help bury these men and the mayor was extremely concerned about it and I think he even went to see these people and so did Blackburn, the families and they helped them make arrangements to the funerals of these men. It was really rough but they had done everything they could with these particular men but there were no real rumblings at all of dissatisfaction.

Bill Thomas- On the two garbage men, were some funds made, or something paid to the widows?

Harry Woodbury- I don't know how it was arranged but some funds were made available, now I don't know if they were city funds or just what but I know the mayor helped on it and some of the others. As I recall, now I don't want to be tied to

this but I think Mr. Blackburn and the mayor worked out some kind of arrangement in the absence of any plan by the city which we had just been in for 5 weeks if you recall. So they could devise something, and they did.

Henry Mitchell- Is it your feeling that this, these accidents had anything to do with the strike?

Harry Woodbury- Anything I say would be said to be speculation. I know that T.O. Jones the labor representative was getting active here and have since heard that he sort of used that and some other things to trigger this thing and call a work stoppage, strike. I was even told that the union that came in here about that time the American Federation of State County City and Municipal employees that they were surprised. It was a horrible time to call a strike right in the middle of winter it is the toughest time for sanitation force to pull a strike and expect to get results because that is the time of the year when if you could do without a sanitation pickup it would be in cold weather. Certainly not in the middle of the summer when the flies and the sanitation problem's even worse but it was cold and I think there was one other thing that you may, someone may have told you about previously. There was some matter of the men going out on rainy days and showing up to work and being paid for a short time and that sort of thing and all these things I am sure had contributed somewhat to the decision of T.O. Jones to call for the walk out you see. Perhaps he can enlighten you more on that but that is just talk and none of which I can document.

Bill Thomas- Since you mentioned the New York Garbage Strike (muffled) do you remember was there any talk at city hall about he problems they were having in New York in relation to Memphis or anything.

Harry Woodbury- Well I recall I believe that one was concluded before the one started here or about the same time.

Henry Mitchell- It was about the same time.

Harry Woodbury- It was about the same time it was concluded about the same time and then this one pops right after, which would lead some people to believe that we were tagged to be next. And then I don't know.

Henry Mitchell- Did you feel there was an y real justification for the strike or did you think this was simply a union tactic?

Harry Woodbury- I think it was the pulling of the strike at this particular time was certainly ill-advised and I don't know what the union people on a higher level might agree. Bear in mind this is a brand new government, been in a month in august only about 5 weeks. The struggle in this department was struggling as hard as it could to do its job and without any real overtures on the part of the union for redress of grievances and that sort of thing that they were just (muffled) Wham we have an inkling of it over the weekend and on the following Monday they were out. Just like that, bam. It almost up there seemed to be an unplanned thing. Although it was a, I

know, I heard Mr. Worth say in some of the meetings we had up there the first he knew of it was when it was already underway and it hit him cold. But I don't think Mr. Worth too much, put that (muffled) to me on record.

Henry Mitchell- Did (muffled) talk or have the idea occur to you or been suggested to you by anybody, when you say there was some talk or some reason to believe that possibly the strike was a planned thing, next after New York for instance. That there was any sense of motive or organization that is other than the, was there any talk that perhaps some forces other than the labor union itself had any interest in a walk out?

Harry Woodbury- Well of course this is what any comment here is purely speculation. All I can say there is there were other elements that rushed in mighty quickly after it had been pulled. Within 3 days it had ceased to become a walk and had become a labor issue, I mean a racial issue. Before the roof was out, just a day or two later.

Henry Mitchell- Did it seem to you that it had become a racial issue that early?

Harry Woodbury- Oh definitely. Within 2 or 3 days all the preachers, or a certain group of the negro preachers in the community and some white, King followed in a hurry. They were involved within 3 or 4 days.

Henry Mitchell- Do you think it was generally believed in the city out of causes like anybody you cannot know for certain what was in people's minds but you make an interesting point within a few days about 3 days or a week you detected racial overtones as well as a labor argument. Do you think that was generally understood in the city that this was generally turning one way or another into a racial matter?

Harry Woodbury- I think there was no doubt about it in the minds of the public in view of the statements that were made by those who rushed into take the side of the sanitation workers and the methods, the way they went about it. The whole of which was pretty much publicized. I think the public generally believes that. Especially the white community.,

Henry Mitchell- Do the city government understand as quickly as you did that what seemed at first to be a labor argument about a union which might be very manageable was quickly turning into a racial matter that might be a good bit more dangerous and might need different treatment from a routine labor?

Harry Woodbury- Well that question is two or three facets to it. Yes, I think they all understood it was becoming a racial issue and if we didn't understand and all we had to do was read the newspapers and I think they had so branded it, just about the time that it had happened. And had mirrored the fact that it had become a racial issue. You see these people wanted an injunction from a previous court not to strike.

Henry Mitchell- Yes the mayor had something to say on that real aspect of it. Do you think it would have made any substantial difference if different negotiators for the union had come to the city if instead of Mr. Wroth for instance...

Harry Woodbury- Mr. Champa?

Henry Mitchell- Yeah Mr. Champa.

Harry Woodbury- Champa, yeah he was ...

Henry Mitchell- (muffled)

Harry Woodbury- Lucie, and I know there was another one. (Muffled) The first meeting I attended down there when he came in, Champa, Lucie, and Paisley there from national.

Henry Mitchell- Did Champa antagonize you, did you have dealings with him?

Harry Woodbury- Dell he was primarily dealing with the mayor, I was there, I can say certainly the man's approaches what his was at the time would irritate any of these citizens. Be it a city official or otherwise.

Bill Thomas- do you think that the mayor might have been handled differently by the mayor and the city government if it had been approached by maybe a less belligerent person that Champa say in the beginning, do you think that got things off to a bad start do you think that made any great difference?

Harry Woodbury- Oh I think he antagonized everybody that he dealt with there and earlier days later in his attitude, his approach changed somewhat but he was definitely militant and belligerent in his manner and in his discussion. I think the tapes on what he had to say in some of these meetings would irritate anyone.

Bill Thomas- When you came up (muffled) on the TV and that sort of thing. He continued to be in character, did he in private meetings?

Harry Woodbury- He changed somewhat in private meetings. He was, he didn't talk as in such a vulgar, vain, and that is all you can call is vulgar.

Bill Thomas- You think maybe he was acting a part while the TV cameras were on?

Harry Woodbury- I think he was acting a part later on, I think he was his normal self in the beginning.

Henry Mitchell- Well actually I don't think he knew the TV cameras were on.

Harry Woodbury- Well that I don't know but you could see them they were there, I don't think that would make a whole lot of difference to him because he came down to take over.

Bill Thomas- Did you feel in hearing him that he had any interest other than his particular interest to his union. Did you feel that he had any interest in a racial aspect of this strike?

Harry Woodbury- At first I don't think so, I think he had a certain way to act and it probably was effective in some other places where he could batter people down in a hurry and get a job done and go on to the next town. I think that after the racial matter was brought into it and he saw allies there and they were already there when he came but he didn't hesitate to use them, nor did Worth, or any of the others. They would use any weapon they could find. I think that even boasting about it later how they had the new formula for settling this type of thing, or getting their way, or winning them and the labor unions joining the ministers.

Bill Thomas- It is a civil rights thing.

Harry Woodbury- They get together and it is a pretty good team for their purpose. And it was very effective.

Henry Mitchell- All I am trying to do and I think you have made it clear because this is something I have often wondered about myself. Was it your feeling, do I understand you right, that Worth and Champa and the union people from out of the city generally were interested in primarily in the union aspect or the union politics if you wish of this matter, or the union revenues, dues, rather than anything else.

Harry Woodbury- They told the mayor as much. As early in the game as (muffled) we will be out of town before the night is over.

Henry Mitchell- Now chiefly on money, not check off.

Harry Woodbury- The check off, the check off and the other point was exclusive recognition. The check off and some other point I forget the other.

Henry Mitchell- They did want exclusive recognition (muffled).

Harry Woodbury- They wanted that and we couldn't give them that because state law prevents us from giving it to them.

Henry Mitchell- But you did not have the feeling with these labor people from through out the city that they had any particular interest in the strike as a racial matter but only as a union...

Harry Woodbury- I don't think they cared too much about it but to use it to gain their end and if that would help them get it I think they were willing to accept the consequences for the city of Memphis and they would use that tool or any other tool that they could have found to win and have gotten what they wanted.

Henry Mitchell- What did you think when you learned that Dr. King was coming to Memphis? What were your reactions on hearing that what did you think about that?

Harry Woodbury- I wasn't particularly concerned about it he was a leader whose movement is intended to improve the, a lot of the negro citizens and it appeared to me that this was just another good place for him to get some exposure. And he been surprised (muffled). Once they changed this thing into a racial matter we were also expecting Carmichael and a few of the other sin, there was rumors all over the place that the black power boys, the militants were going to come in. They didn't and I felt it was, since they had to bring somebody in someplace else he was the better choice.

Henry Mitchell- Dr. King was?

Harry Woodbury- Yes certainly.

Bill Thomas- Now did you feel Harry that King's coming would have any effect at all on the situation.

Harry Woodbury- I didn't think so, I didn't feel like it would have any effect whatsoever. It was, other than to be the rallying point for a lot of discussion and talk that sort of thing. Bear in mind at the time this thing was more of a court, it was in the courts again. That we were ready to abide by the law. This is an illegal strike and this was sort of (muffled) that they were putting on.

Bill Thomas- How was it to be a mediator in this sort of thing, was it a very difficult job? Why was the union so difficult?

Harry Woodbury- They weren't too difficult to deal with. Going into these discussions we were sincerely wanting to reach some sort of agreement even though the (Muffled) proceedings were not countenanced by the court. (muffled) But it was reaching for another tool that might help us settle it over here so when you go back to court say, let's get the thing out of court lift the injunction.

Bill Thomas- However nothing too much ever came out of the mediation and that is why I was led to the conclusion that therefore it must have been very difficult for the two sides to get together.

Henry Mitchell- Are we talking loud enough?

Bill Thomas- Yeah.

Harry Woodbury- No we were anxious to get the men back to work, the mayor was holding all their benefits even past the city's deadline for hospitalization and other benefits because he wanted to get them back to work. A lot of us were telling him he ought to go on and take them at their word. They say in court that this wasn't a strike that they had just stopped work they had quit the job. Some of us were telling him well why don't you go ahead and take them at their word and take an ad in the paper next month and say I need a crew. If they quit they are not striking they told the Chancellor there.

Bill Thomas- But the mayor didn't want to do that.

Harry Woodbury- No he was still searching for grounds on which the thing could be settled and putt he people back to work.

Henry Mitchell- What is your belief after viewing the matter from the beginning through its conclusion, can you say what you think occurred to cause the thing to get, to grow to the dimensions that it did grow to?

Harry Woodbury- Oh I think that primarily the actions of the militant ministers, is responsible for the (muffle) that we had in this city.

Henry Mitchell- You mean the negro ministers..

Harry Woodbury- And their white brethren that were with them. I think they were primarily responsible for the riots, they were primarily responsible for King's death, let me pout that on the record.

Henry Mitchell- You mean the group for instance that marched from the cathedral, was that the group you mean?

Harry Woodbury- No the smallest group of ministers whose names I won't mention but they were all in the papers and they all showed up at the mass meetings down here and city council chambers. They were the inciters that kept the emotions in a high pitch.

Henry Mitchell- What did they have to gain from that or why would they do that?

Harry Woodbury- I don't know unless they wanted to portray themselves as community leaders and this was an opportunity.

Henry Mitchell- And when you said they were responsible for King's death, you mean they are responsible for creating the climate?

Harry Woodbury- Creating the climate, the conditions, which led to his death. Constant agitation. They organized the marches that ended in a riot. They worked hand and glove with these young militants who were so much in evidence were doing the riot.

Henry Mitchell- Sort of like the marshals, the invaders.

Harry Woodbury- That is correct the same bunch. And it doesn't take much to set off a bomb but they pulled all the conditions together and then she popped.

Henry Mitchell- Do you feel that the political situation had anything at all to do with this?

Harry Woodbury- To some degree yes. I don't know if we will ever know just how much, Mr. Ingram obviously never gave up after the election. He said he promised to support on the night of the election when it was obvious he had lost but he kept popping back up into the picture during the strike and he was around and later events have just born that out more and more that he is not going to quit. He fits a

program of harassment that he is obviously involved in. He pops up now as the representative as trying to organize the firemen and he gets his picture into the Parade magazine with this group later on, so all that simply supports the, my belief that I think he was involved all the way though.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled)

Harry Woodbury- And of course everyone knows where his support was, you have got a tremendous vote among the black community. These events came along and we had the strike and 2 or 3 days later it becomes a racial matter and the first time in the city's history I would guess the community polarized into black and white communities which is very unfortunate. The mayor after the election had told everybody that he was willing to get it and would like to come get it and he went before a group of ministers and said let's forget it now, I want to be, I know you didn't vote for me and that what the record shows but I would like to be the mayor of all the people and there was a number, 2 or 3 of the ministers commended him. They said we see you a little different. But that didn't last long, see that was sometime around Christmas before we got into the (muffled) and then all this came. It has been a very traumatic experience to say the least.

Henry Mitchell- It must be a terrible thing for a man for his own political advancement to (muffled) for the lack of a better word. This kind of danger and rioting and in a couple cases death. But you think that is pretty much what former Mayor Ingram did, that he has a responsibility in this?

Harry Woodbury- I may never know how much of the responsibility can be credited to him. I can only say that it is my belief that he never quit scheming to harass city government after his defeat and he was very much in evidence as the press (muffled) several places along the line during the strike. He was a person obviously that large numbers in the negro community had confidence in and national would turn to him for consultation and that sort of thing.

Henry Mitchell- Do you have any idea as to why the negro community did support him politically I have never understood myself what was particularly attractive about mayor Ingram to the negro community.

Harry Woodbury- Well Henry, if it was any one thing and you read the papers like I have and if you will just recall when he was city judge he made quite a name for himself in dismissing charges of most any kind of particularly against negro citizens. He built himself up a following while on the bench by being, making a name for himself as a judge who would let you off light, or let you altogether.

Henry Mitchell- Oh so he took an anti-police stance.

Harry Woodbury- That's right, it was an anti-police stance he started building at that time. His fights with the police department, all that contributed. That is the day he (muffled).

Henry Mitchell- When he was mayor though there wasn't a position of greater power than as a city judge. Did he or his administration provide enlarged pension benefits or more jobs for negroes or that kind of thing?

Harry Woodbury- Not particularly. I don't think so.

Henry Mitchell- I wasn't aware I just didn't know?

Harry Woodbury- No.

Bill Thomas- I am sort of like Henry I can't understand the attraction of Ingram either especially after the property program, which....

Henry Mitchell- Of course what we don't understand is that it is evolving. I just mention it to find out what you think and what you understand.

Harry Woodbury- That is the way he got his foot hold.

Henry Mitchell- It was mainly in the court.

Harry Woodbury- Mainly in the courts and when he was mayor I don't think he particularly did anything great for the negro population. (muffled) summer programs and even he was mayor at the time when the courts issued the injunction against the sanitation workers the first time. But in politics it is the fellow who does something for you last is the one that they will vote for.

Henry Mitchell- Well maybe there is also a question of what people believe as much as...

Harry Woodbury- I think this is true.

Henry Mitchell- There was a good bit of talk that I heard during the campaign which mayor Lobe finally won to the effect that mayor Lobe was a racist. Many specific things were said alleged conversations with his cook and what not. Do you think there was any sort of organized campaign to label mayor Lobe as a racist with the idea of damaging him in the eyes of the negro citizens?

Harry Woodbury- Yeah I think that Ingram's campaign itself bear that out. He played largely to the negro community during that campaign he was trying to carry water on both shoulders and it was pretty well conceded that would be where he would get his strongest support. That was born out in the election return. Of course Lobe, he tried to appeal to the total community but I think that Ingram had such a foothold it was almost a desert for getting votes although he did try. I think that opposition pretty well hung that label on the mayor as much as he was trying to overcome it.

Bill Thomas- I am wondering from a mediation standpoint, from a bargaining standpoint, Mr. Blackburn was it seems successful in picking up the garbage in really an extraordinarily dire situation, Did this strengthen the city's bargaining position at all, I mean did this have any effect?

Harry Woodbury- I think that if the city had really wanted to beat these men down and won the thing, could have done it. Picking up the garbage was awfully expensive with a police car following each garbage truck down the street, but they were picking up the garbage. Of course bear in mind it was during cold weather and it wasn't as much and it wasn't as big of a problem. But it was being picked up. The death of Dr. King of course was the thing that was bad and unintended. While we were trying to mediate the thing and settle it previously of course we eventually worked hard at it, was a very critical period then and the result of Dr. King's death the riots broke out all over the nation and Johnson sent Jim Reynolds down here his under secretary of labor to assist Frank Miles in settling this matter.

Bill Thomas- So that did become a factor?

Harry Woodbury- Oh yes it was very big factor. It ceased to be even a racial issue and as minor racial situation it became a national thing and it wasn't just another garbage strike.

Henry Mitchell- Do you think the fact that the matter was eventually settled is partly due to the city government's concern not only of the city about of the united states, is that what you are saying?

Harry Woodbury- I am saying it was more than just a Memphis dispute racial, or labor, or otherwise. It was a national matter.

Henry Mitchell- I think that is certainly true.

Harry Woodbury- No doubt about it.

Henry Mitchell- What was your understanding or what is your understanding now, or was there any such incident, of the incident that actually caused the men to walk out, the garbage workers.

Harry Woodbury- As I recall it had primarily to do with the working conditions on rainy days and question of what they would be paid for show up time and that kind of thing.

Henry Mitchell- That is the....(muffled) the white workers got...

Harry Woodbury- I don't know all the details of it but they were showing up and being sent home on a rainy day and that sort of thing. I don't know the details of it but I am under the impression that the misunderstanding in that respect was the (muffled) it was the thing that Jones used to call the men out.

Henry Mitchell- The thing you are referring to has since been said to the occasion which if a certain number of people showed up in bad weather that the negro workers were paid something and sent home whereas the white workers were allowed the full day's work with the greater pay. When you say a misunderstanding you mean the city government was fully aware of that situation that it would not have continued?

Harry Woodbury- I think it could have been settled within a conference of some sort if they hadn't been so trigger happy on pulling the men out.

Henry Mitchell- You think that might have been a pretext rather than a real grievance.

Harry Woodbury- Well it certainly would appear to be that way. I don't know I think it was a real grievance for the men involved. I don't know if there was any discrimination between white and black in this particular instance, I don't know that to be a fact or not to be true. But I think if these men had on their own come to Blackburn and said let's settle this thing, this is not right for us to come to work and to be sent right home without any pay or anything, I think the mayor would have settled it for him, but instead they turned to Jones and went along with him and in turned walked out. I think that was the one thing that actually triggered it.

Henry Mitchell- That was not mentioned in the Memphis news media until after Dr. King's death I think. If my understanding of the matter was correct that it was not mentioned in our newspapers or broadcast in our magazines, do you think that would have anything to do with people's feelings about the strike or would that make no great difference whether they knew...

Harry Woodbury- Then or now?

Henry Mitchell- Whether they knew it at the time.

Harry Woodbury- I don't think that anyone would have wanted to have seen those men mistreated and I think when you have a grievance it takes a little time to solve a grievance as well as it does to let one well up to the point where there is one. Apparently this has been standard procedure in the past. Blackburn had only 5 weeks to learn these things, you don't learn these things over night.

Henry Mitchell- This was not an innovation of the Lobe administration.

Harry Woodbury- In so far as I know it wasn't. I think it was just a practice that had been continued.

Bill Thomas- Did you think that it is possible Henry that the strikers (muffled) might have been taking advantage of the new administration? Mr. Blackburn has a policy that he really wasn't responsible for.

Harry Woodbury- Well I don't think by and large those men had, were really informed as to what their right were and I don't know if they, to be perfectly frank it appears to me from looking back at the way they responded in marches from the city hall over to the auditorium that day they were just blindly following. That they were being led to believe that they were being (muffled) mistreated and that they had been sold on the, that this would be a way that they could get something done.

Bill Thomas- And the labor was using them to (muffled).

Harry Woodbury- I think T.O. Jones was and then the labor union came on in...

Bill Thomas- Them too.

Harry Woodbury- Yeah them too. But it all built up to Dr. King's death which was very shocking and sad thing.

Bill Thomas- On the rainy day thing were you aware of that at all?

Harry Woodbury- No I had no knowledge of it, I was trying to learn this job.

Henry Mitchell- I wondered why at the first that I heard of that particular complaint like most of us I had no merits of it or even whether the charge itself is true.

Harry Woodbury- Well I think Harry the whole thing is minor and it could have been settled it wasn't a great issue. There are probably greater issues now than that. But apparently there was some deep seeded mistrust or the administration I am not speaking of the necessarily the current administration just of the people in charge of the sanitation department across the years.

Henry Mitchell- It doesn't seem like the government has even been in long enough to build up either trust or distrust.

Harry Woodbury- Yeah they hadn't been up long enough and as a matter of fact some of the greatest financial progress that the sanitation department ever made was when Henry Lobe was the commissioner in charge of it. One year he gave them two raises in one year. Back in a time when 45 cents an hour was the going rate. And he saw some inequities there and in one year managed to get them two raises and also to give them the first vacations they ever had under his administration. And really at the time this happened the wages that these people were making was not out of line with they were making around the rest of the country. As a matter of fact what we have settled for in these mediation hearings have put the sanitation workers, who are common labor and that, you can't call them anything else put them way ahead of the rest of the community. Yeah we have some excess people and right now they are on the payroll, Henry Lobe won't turn them loose even though they are costing us \$300,000 a year. Until we can get them other jobs at an equal rate and you can't move them.

Bill Thomas- (muffled)

Harry Woodbury- No they don't want to leave they can't go anywhere else and make that kind of money. And of course (muffled) the department it has been used as a place to in effect to provide employment on one hand and welfare on the other. They hire the cripples and that type of people and we tried to move one the other day out here at the airport. Well he is deaf. They turned him back they said well (muffled). He can't hear. And some that are really crippled and maybe this whole thing is going to do good because (muffled) now he will be able bodied. They have given them welfare in the past.

Bill Thomas- I am sorry I don't understand that, able-bodied is that some new requirements, some new standards for hiring?

Harry Woodbury- Well there won't be any hiring for a long time because the department is way over staffed now but at the time when they do need employees they show people from the sanitation department to be sure they are able bodied people who are able to earn the pay of evidence now being paid. And do the work. I talk to so many there are fine people in the sanitation department. Good, solid hard working negro citizens who don't know anything else but to work with their hands and to do what somebody tells them. They would be lost otherwise. So if somebody tells them boy we better go out on strike they become convinced that they, it doesn't take too much to convince them that is what they ought to do.

Bill Thomas- I was interested , Harry, I didn't know that Lobe had provided two raises and the vacation days. Did, was there ever any attempt to remind them of this?

Harry Woodbury- Yeah they were told that but they were too far gone they were following a new leader.

Bill Thomas- Another day had come.

Harry Woodbury- That's right. And some of them knew and of course it didn't make any difference to them and right in the middle of the strike and I was involved on this on Washington's birthday we got reports that some of the children of these workers were suffering and they needed food.

Bill Thomas- This is on the 22nd I guess.

Harry Woodbury- That's right and we arranged, I was called into this conference and this fellow Pickett was into it and he came down to tell us what the situation was, investigated and found out that some of them did need food. So we made an emergency call to commissioner Yateman, whom I have known for quite awhile.

Bill Thomas- Now who is he.

Harry Woodbury- He is the commissioner of public welfare. And told him that we wanted him to open his office up.

Henry Mitchell- For the state of Tennessee?

Harry Woodbury- State of Tennessee, we wanted to expedite a method for getting food stamps for these people and put the city on the line here for \$15,000 to get them food stamps. And did it. That was, I don't know what day of the week it was but in just a day or so we had it going and city funds were used to underwrite the payment of those food stamps. We did that for months until.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) criticized for it.

Harry Woodbury- Oh we got criticized for it, but Henry (muffled). No one wants to give him the credit.

Bill Thomas- Why did he do that you think?

Harry Woodbury- He said that he wouldn't fight children. This is the same picket that came back 2 or 3 months later and led the campaign in to get the mayor recalled.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) of the polarization I think was the word you used and certainly that was the sense in which the black community went off in one corner and the white community off in another in a way as far as you know and as far as I know had not occurred in the city before. You would not have approved of that I know, anymore than anybody else. Did you have any feelings that, was there anything that could have been done to prevent that or is there anything that can be done to prevent that kind of thing happening again and again.

Harry Woodbury- Henry I don't know I just know that for years around here we tried to all of us most of the responsible citizens I think have tried to live in harmony. If you will recall, we were, they had problems over in Little Rock with the integration of schools. We were under court order here in Memphis to integrate Memphis State. I was their PR director at that time and did that without any problem whatever. I recall there were 8 students that came out there and the way that was handled in a public relations way to keep it from getting to be any big problem. The community worked together, there was an interracial committee that was interested in wanting us to continue to have harmony. Everybody worked together to do these things that had to be done in these changing times and we did that successfully. Our busses were integrated, our libraries, our public school system. All of these things were done quietly with responsible citizens working together in the foreground and in the back ground too. To do it without tearing our city up. I think everybody thought that we were doing pretty well until Ingram came on the scene.

Bill Thomas- On the line of those I think you are right there has been an awful lot of progress made and (muffled). Why do you think it wasn't treated this machinery still existed why didn't it work this time?

Harry Woodbury- Well bear in mind this was an explosion, this was not something that you had a great deal of forewarning on that we knew we were going to have a strike on February the 8th or 6th or whatever day it was it just popped over the weekend.

Bill Thomas- So it was not something you could...

Harry Woodbury- No.

Bill Thomas- Sit down quietly and talk about you had to deal with it I see.

Henry Mitchell- Some people, of course particularly in the negro community, see things from a very different point of view. Do you see anything that might have been done or might have been tried on the part of the city government or of the mayor apart from the city government that might have made any real difference?

Harry Woodbury- Well I don't have anything in mind but 20/20 hindsight is pretty clear vision (muffled) When we came in if you will recall the mayor was making an effort. He had gone before these negro ministers down here and talked with them and said that I want to be the mayor for all of you.

Henry Mitchell- And that did get a good response?

Harry Woodbury- It appeared to be from the newspaper what they had said and what you saw on television as a result of it. And then for the first time ever, the equipment of the negro city commissioner was named and Odell Horton who is a director and who has a job comparable to mine and he was brought in. Now what in the world is that. We had meetings and said we were going to bring the negroes in on the boards. We had done some of it already by bringing them in and had gotten that out whether it was being believed or what. So this were all inferences to really share the responsibility that, bring in people to share the responsibility of government from the negro community. So in the same things they were underway and again just 5 weeks. So these things were being done all this time.

Henry Mitchell- Well (muffled).

Harry Woodbury- Really when you are about to be hit over the back of the head and you don't know it, you can't look back unless you can see that it is coming because this thing popped. It had been (muffled) well that is something else (muffled)

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) I would not be entirely certain in saying that I don't have to say that I would not know exactly what to recommend to the mayor or the city government. Say if you followed it closely and you can see what did happen is there anything that if you could be transported back to just before the walk out is there anything that you could think of that...

Harry Woodbury- Could have been done?

Henry Mitchell- Could have been done?

Harry Woodbury- Henry I really don't think so. I don't think there was hating in the world that could have been done. This thing popped. There is some evidence that it could have been planned. When someone is planning to knock you in the head and you are unsuspecting it well I don't think there is anything you can do about it.

Henry Mitchell- Well the city government has been charged because that is the word in many quarters of having been intransigent and bullheaded and hung up on various small points that might have been yielded. Do you think there is any merit at all to those..

Harry Woodbury- All I can do is to ask what the points were. They hadn't been brought out they hadn't been laid on the table to see what they were. There wasn't any widespread clamor from the black community for this or for that prior to this time. There wasn't anyone yelling saying that we are being mistreated we are not getting this, we are not getting that. When all at the same time the new administration was saying we are trying to be fair we have (muffled) we have people that we are going to bring in on boards we have named a man on the beer board. Later since many more have been added, but we put one on the airport commission, now these did take place. Dan Wardman on the airport commission there is a man on the beer board he was put in that was publicized. The impression was being made that we were trying to incorporate the negro community into this (muffled) and to do what Henry had said back before Christmas, he wanted to be mayor of all the people. For a 5 week period of time he was showing that he said that in good faith.

Henry Mitchell- I think the record shows that the city government was acting in perfect good faith and that if there were complaints they should have been specific complaints brought to the attention of the city government.

Harry Woodbury- There weren't no, if they were. That had been put on the record. And then Lobe is so tight he will answer a complaint, anybody who complains about anything to him in writing or on the telephone gets an answer immediately.

Henry Mitchell- He must spend 28 hours a day just dictating letters.

Harry Woodbury- He sure does I don't see how he does it. Then they are just divided among the rest of us to get the job done, to find out what can be done if anything about these various complaints.

Henry Mitchell- What do you think the long range effect on the city will be or will there be any long range.

Harry Woodbury- Oh I think that we are in a changing times and have been for some time. I think this is accelerating some of the change. I think it is good to come out of everything as horrible as this matter turned out to be. I think everybody is going to give some or it is going to expedite the giving of ground certainly on the side of the white community and I think in time the black community which right now seems to think that it has got the upper hand they are going to find that they can't travel quite as fast as they would like too. There are many things that need to be done. Right now we are sitting on top of a housing problem that is explosive and we are trying to do what we can on it. But you can't just overnight correct evils that have been here for years and years and years. We haven't done a thing in 10 years about code enforcement in the Kansas St. area down here. Just since May 22nd we have moved in and condemned all the dilapidated vacant houses, which is about 230 units. Well that is progress and that is just 2 months but we just can't kill these things overnight, gonna burn it down. There is nothing we can do that to keep it from being burned down, except try to pull out the fire. What I mean it is just basically

impossible, it is economically impossible with the resources of the community, You had to put a sanitation service fee to help meet the budget. Well that hurts everybody but the city has got to pay revenue not just to pay the sanitation workers but to hire more employees and to maintain an adequate of health service out here at the hospital. It is going to take time but we are working in that direction.

Henry Mitchell- I wish I thought that everybody had seen 3 days after the walkout that there was strong racial overtones in this sanitation strike and although that was very clear to you I am quite convinced from what people have told me that it was not clear to a great many people and isn't even now that one way or another the whole business was turning into a racial question rather than a usual union dispute.

Harry Woodbury- I don't think there is any question about it, that within 3 days it was a racial issue.

Henry Mitchell- I don't think it is any question about it either but I don't think many people understood that.

Harry Woodbury- I don't know if they didn't and they just couldn't understand what they were looking at. They could read the newspapers they could see who was lining up and calling mass meetings at this church or that church and to me it was obvious.

Henry Mitchell- Would it have been better at the time it was clear to you and to some people that this was becoming a racial matter with the possibility of blacks on one side and whites on another rather than a union dispute that some of the techniques that have worked on racial matters before had been used. Inter-racial committees and public relations and the way things were integrated in this city. I can conceive that one approach might be appropriate for a union recognition matter whereas a different approach might work much better in an explosive racial matter.

Harry Woodbury- Well now you can use the word explosive at this late date, but remember this was a cumulative thing. At first it was a union, was a labor matter, then within 3 days the various ministers who had been more or less militant I their public utterances in the past, begun to rush in to take over and to lead and to encourage these men. At the moment you could assess the scope or forecast the extent to which this rate this thing this racial matter would go. You would keep thinking well maybe it can be contained. Within I don't know whether it was one of those, the following...This is about February 22nd, this was early in the, the following Tuesday. They went out on Monday, not the next day but the about the next Tuesday or somewhere along the line they marched and said they were going to come into city hall. Well that was when the ministers really...they took the council had become interested and then they were keenly interested in it and Fred Davis a councilmen said he would go get him a committee and he was going to call a meeting and he was going to settle this thing. See he did and he wasn't in control of the meeting ten minutes before they had taken it away form him the microphone and the bologna sandwiches down there on the table. It was quite a (muffled). It was a real show. But...You know it would be (muffled) if he could tell at the beginning of

a ball game just how big the score is going to be at the end but you can't always do it. So there was (muffled) we had years and years of what apparently was good harmonious relations around here. And then this one popped like it did and no one had any idea it was going to grow to the proportions that it did.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled) for 10 years this is going on and only now (muffled) did you think that perhaps the city administration was victim of the suddenly changing times?

Harry Woodbury- Well it just happened to be here at the moment that the change is taking place., I couldn't tell you today that next week we wouldn't have another Chicago fire down in the Kansas St. area. There well could do but there is not a thing in the world I can do sitting here at this moment other than work at it a piece at a time and travel just as fast as we can within the legal limits we have to begin cleaning it up. There hasn't been a unit of low cost public housing built in this city since 1960. Well that is, that is bad and you can't move people out of an area if they don't have some place to go. They have to have some place to go unless someone has built something.

Henry Mitchell- Something that they can afford so that..

Harry Woodbury- That is right within their means.

Henry Mitchell- It doesn't do very much to enforce the building codes we all know the building codes are not enforced or haven't been.

Harry Woodbury- (Muffled) with the exception of this area.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) negro low cost housing in the matter of plumbing and that sort of thing. The argument has been well what is the point of condemning this housing where will these people go. They will simply go to equivalent of housing even more congested. So the answer would seem not to lie in condemning the thing.

Harry Woodbury- Providing more decent safe and sanitary housing for them

Henry Mitchell- This costs money.

Harry Woodbury- And the money is not the problem, the money is available it is the government will support some of it, the banks are ready to put it up, it is having a place to put it.

Henry Mitchell- You mean of locating the housing.

Harry Woodbury- Yeah locating new housing. And to break through the red tape of the federal government to get some of the areas officially designated there is going to one in the (muffled) and the Beal St. are is coming up. It is a cumbersome thing to move one of these projects along it takes 18 months after they have designated to plan it and get it to where you buy the first (muffled) of it for region development.

Perhaps that is safeguard to all the public for the federal government to move that slowly.

Henry Mitchell- Could the previous administration have moved more rapidly than they did or is it only now?

Harry Woodbury- They didn't do anything.

Henry Mitchell- They didn't build any housing units.

Harry Woodbury- Not here hadn't been any built for two previous, for over 8 years. Right not they are (muffled). Prodded and prodded. So we have got more problems we didn't solve them by any means I recognize them.

Henry Mitchell- Well it was nice to hear somebody say that money is not a problem it seems to be the problem in almost everything.

Harry Woodbury- It is true layers and layers of red tape is the biggest problem.

Henry Mitchell- Are there any areas, well we have almost run the tape out.

Bill Thomas- Unless there is something else (muffled).

Henry Mitchell- You may be shocked when you (muffled)

Harry Woodbury- I don't know whether there is anything else I can add to it or not. I don't know whether I have said anything helpful.

Bill Thomas- No I think so. (Tape End)