



## Bill Ross, Memphis AFL-CIO Labor Council, 1968

Item Type	Sound
Publisher	Rhodes College
Rights	Digital Audio (c) 2013, University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department. All rights reserved. Use of this audio shall be governed by the University of Memphis Libraries "Duplication Agreement" <a href="http://www.memphis.edu/libraries/pdfs/duplication_agreement.pdf">http://www.memphis.edu/libraries/pdfs/duplication_agreement.pdf</a>
Download date	2024-11-06 18:42:38
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10267/33884">http://hdl.handle.net/10267/33884</a>

SS112.mp3

Joan Beifuss- Today is July 16<sup>th</sup> 1968 we are at the office of Bill Ross with interviewers, Tom Beckner, Joan Beifuss, and Jerry Beyer.

Bill Ross- The ultra conservative right wing movement first came to the front in Memphis Tennessee in the late 40's and early 50's through the efforts of Robert B. Snowden. He lists his occupation as farm and feed manufacturer who is a large land owner in Crittenden County. Campaigned for the 48 states was one of his first organizations to endorse. I am not going to give you any background on these organizations.

Joan Beifuss- No.

Bill Ross- However, included with Snowden on the national advisory committee for the campaign for the 48 states Vance J. Alexander, Horace Home, J.B. Monadonaco, William B. Pollard, and (muffled) turner. However with the exception of Horace Home the rest of them outside of Snowden have not been noted in any right wing activity of any consequence. Overlooked awhile ago was Fred W. Lucas and William R. Kent. Mr. Snowden continued his right wing activity or has never ceased his right wing activity and in 1959 he is credited with a gift of \$1,750 to the American Good Governments Society. Another one of his organizations in the late 60's was a committee for the Monroe Doctrine.

Joan Beifuss- In the later 60's or 50's?

Bill Ross- Late 60's, might go back a little bit. National office for the camping for the 48 states was located in Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Bill can you in one sentence say what that was?

Bill Ross- Campaign for the 48 states? (muffled) group the predecessor of at least one active right wing movement. American constitutional action, it included many individual s later active in better known extremist John Birch society. Also some of the constitutional amendments that pushed the limit he federal government are similar to some now being put before state legislatures. So darn many of these you can keep up with them. You want to monitor this thing aren't you?

Tom Beckner- Yeah, just for the record why don't you tell us about this (muffled) search just for a second and give us a slight background on it.

Bill Ross- Well the campaign for the 48 states was primarily set up to promote legislation that would return or curb the power of the federal government and return it to the states as practically all these right wingers were trying to do. Some that they were trying to do was burn bridges, legislation to require annual budget balancing to (muffled) to limit the top income tax rates 25%. A regular amendment to over ride the treaty making power. Reid Walter to get a state's full power to amend the constitution without the intervention of Congress, how ridiculous it is.

(muffled) to change electoral college as to take away the excessive power now exercised by the minority groups and the larger cities on the Fresno Electoral College System.

Tom Beckner- Bill and what you are reading form there, this publication by Grouper Search is that right?

Bill Ross- Group research out of Washington D.C. an organization nonprofit organization whose primary function is to gather facts concerning extremist organizations.

Joan Beifuss- Bill this research is funded by whom?

Bill Ross- Foundations and through national AFLCIO and several other organizations.

Joan Beifuss- Does it tie in with (muffled) and ...

Bill Ross- (muffled) and defamation league are both.

Tom Beckner- You happen to have the address of group research right off hand anywhere?

Bill Ross- Group research incorporated, 422 Bon Building 1404 New York Avenue, New York Northwest it is Washington D.C. Other than being on the advisory committee of the John Birch society Mr. Snowden's was active in the committee against summit entanglement. So this is another front organization for the John Birch society, the chairman of the committee was Robert Welsch himself. Other people associated with this committee we met Buckley Jr. another well known right winger. Trying to pick out some of the more prominent ones.

Joan Beifuss- Anybody else local?

Bill Ross- No local no. On the executive committee was Tom Anderson out of Nashville.

Joan Beifuss- I am a little bit confused are you saying these committees with different names are all fronts...

Bill Ross- All front organizations out of the Birch society.

Joan Beifuss- Do they pick up in the people who are not....(Tape Break)

Joan Beifuss- What would you give as the beginning date for the John Birch society nationally?

Bill Ross- what?

Joan Beifuss- How would you date the beginning of the John Birch society's power nationally, prominence nationally?

Bill Ross- Nationally?

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Bill Ross- The John Birch society has very little influence nationally.

Joan Beifuss- No but what date?

Bill Ross- What date?

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Bill Ross- The John Birch society was formed in December 1957.

Joan Beifuss- Ok.

Bill Ross- In Indianapolis, where...

Joan Beifuss- I just want you to say it on the tape.

Bill Ross- Welch brought together 12 millionaires and spoken to them for three days which constitutes the blue book or the bible of the John Birch society.

Joan Beifuss- And then this sort of got here when he started in Memphis then in the late 50's?

Bill Ross- Actually yes. It really got started a little bit earlier than that in as much as Welch was well acquainted with the people of his thinking and he drew them around him after he had formed the Birch society.

Joan Beifuss- Now what about any communist movement she rein say the 40's at he end of the Crump regime?

Bill Ross- I want to put one other thing and I will take your concerning. Well what I wanted to do was to read directly from the blue book where Mr. Welsch said the John Birch society would be a monolithic organization. He even refers going back to the campaign in the 48 states with Mr. Welsch and the blue book on page 88 and 89 of the 4<sup>th</sup> printing an example of fronts of the other extreme as to size and permanence which we would set up might be a committee to protestify and met for evidence. Gentlemen don't be afraid as long names for these fronts. Such names a showing exactly what the committee is for. Help to bring on to the letterhead and to the role of active supporters, a great many people who would take no interest what so ever in an activity of a more general nature and a more vague description, even as ably directed as one of the campaign of the 48 states. The campaign of the 48 states was actually one of Welsch's organizations that he set up prior to the formation of the John Birch society. I think that is enough to bring us up to the John Birch Society and then we will go back and talk about the other right wing activities in Memphis prior to that. During the Crump machine there was very little activity of any of the extremist groups because Crump had set up city clubs as his ward and precinct organization. After his passing the city clubs were taken over by the white citizen's

council. Richard Eely and Mr. McCarthy. Eely was first elected president of the council of city clubs with a known segregation of course and after the formation of the John Birch Society the more fluent of the white city council members went to the John Birch Society and the others went to the ku klux klan. The klan did not openly divulge its activities until the early 60's when our middle 60's when a rally was held at rainbow terrace in 1965, however there had been some activity of a lesser nature prior to this. Along with the klan activity was a great deal of activity in the field of anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish. By one (muffled) 976 Pennsylvania rather elderly fellow who has nothing more to do than to deliver copies of Common Sense, anti-Semitic publication. And then the klan showed further anti-Jewish sentiments when it distributed a handbill and several (muffled) in late 1965 or 1966, against the all negro goodwill home that had admitted two white children, (muffled) on Leo Bearman Jr., Rabbi Wax. The quote from the handbill, they say Leo Bearman Jr. is the president of the goodwill home and Rabbi Wax is the vice president. These Christ-less Jews are guilty of atrocious crimes worse than those they accuse the Nazis of. Why don't they mix Jew children with negros. Most of this so-called Jews are communistic Russians who took up Judaism for camouflage to conquer the white Christian race.

Tom Beckner- Seriously they refer to them as Christ-less Jews.

Joan Beifuss- Bill are you saying that the klan did not operate here until the early 20's until it came back up in the 60's?

Bill Ross- The klan as such didn't, as I said before they operated through the citizen's councils the white citizen's councils.

Joan Beifuss- But it is a separate entity.

Bill Ross- Was dominant all through this section.

Tom Beckner- While we are talking about the klan do you happen to know or who WRS stands for, in the address that the klan gives here? They give a WRS post office box in Memphis Tennessee.

Bill Ross- (Muffled).

Tom Beckner- I didn't know if it was a person an organization or a front organization or what it was.

Bill Ross- I never seen it, I would have to see it. Another front organization of the middle 60's was a John Q society.

Joan Beifuss- John what?

Bill Ross- John Q society.

Joan Beifuss- Spell it.

Bill Ross- just Q.

Joan Beifuss- Ok.

Bill Ross- This was an organization made of professional people primarily doctors and dentists. Headed by Dr., John C. Beard and Dr. Anthony Jerome. Others active in the organization were Dr. Ackermann, James Wilson Joel Walker, William Satterfield, Michael Marrolaa, he is dead now.

Joan Beifuss- Did they have any particular purpose?

Bill Ross- Just to carry out the (muffled) of the John Birch Society among the professional people. And then we moved into a very vigorous campaign, for the John Birch Society when they started distributing films made by national education program out of Harding College, headed by Dr. George S. Benson at that time president of the college who had later resigned and it now heading up the national education program. During this time they were openly advertising in the local news media, they were making every effort possible to get films such as communism on the map in public and paroquial schools. A fight was put up by myself and other interested parties and were successful in driving these films from the county school system and the catholic paroquial schools.

Joan Beifuss- Who were the other interested parties?

Bill Ross- There was Erik Anderson, Mrs. What was that lady's name? Mrs. James Harper, Tom Mitchell, and a group of others that I can't recall right now.

Joan Beifuss- In this kind of a fight against putting films into the public schools would the PTA be involved in something like that?

Bill Ross- PTA was never involved in this they didn't attempt to stop it. With a very small effort made in 1966 by the Birch Society to infiltrate the local PTA's but they didn't get it off the ground. At about the same time that the films were appearing the public schools, there was a public mic program here on one of the local radio stations and sponsored by a fellow by the name Sheriff for he was the MC on it. We were successful in not only driving the John Birch's off the program but drying up the sponsorship.

Joan Beifuss- How did they drive them off the program?

Bill Ross- Do what?

Joan Beifuss- How do you drive John Birchers off an open mic program.

Bill Ross- We recruited 5 coveted ladies and furnished them with material that told the truth about the John Birch Society, these people can't stand the truth.

Joan Beifuss- That's what you did?

Bill Ross- Yeah exactly the way we did it.

Joan Beifuss- Ok in other words you are fighting fire with fire.

Bill Ross- I am fighting fire with truth.

Tom Beckner- Did you get to the sponsors the same way? Write letters?

Bill Ross- Well when we go to John Birch's office there was no longer the entrance there.

Joan Beifuss- Because that open mic program now on WHER is pretty much dominated by...

Bill Ross- Same group is doing it Mrs., I can't even think of it now.

Most of them try to disguise their voice so where you can't...

Joan Beifuss- You mean you think it ins the same ladies that keep calling in?

Bill Ross- Sure it is. Now that was in 1965. All during the early 60's Macentire with his Christian Nanny communist crusade was in, Fred Schwartz, no Fred Schwartz and his Christian anti communist crusade and Mcentire with his, what did Mcentire call his?

Joan Beifuss- Colonel Mcentire and I can't remember?

Bill Ross- His program...

Joan Beifuss- Billy James Harvest did he come?

Bill Ross- Harvest was in, they were together at one time.

Joan Beifuss- Did you ever send anyone to these programs that was set up here just to see what was happening at them?

Bill Ross- I made one with Billy James Hargass, the auditorium one blustery Saturday night. They charge you a dollar to get in pass the collection plate 3 times while you were there and they had a crowd of about 800 on a blustery Saturday night. Hargass is a money raiser. (Muffled) shut it off and let me get some of this... (Tape Break)

Bill Ross- The old program is West Memphis station for almost two years. May still be on I haven't monitored..

Joan Beifuss- Yes it is still on.

Bill Ross- Mcentire is still on over there?

Joan Beifuss- Yes he is on, it's on 10:00.

Bill Ross- An hour program every day?

Joan Beifuss- No half hour 10:30 in the morning.

Tom Beckner- What is the name of it?

Joan Beifuss- The only thing that sticks in my mind is Christian Crusade and that is not nit.

Bill Ross- He was the founder of the American council of Christian churches out of Collinswood.

Joan Beifuss- Right Collinswood New Jersey that is the group that started the national council of churches.

Bill Ross- That's right. This is his main pitch, he opposed the American council of churches. Of course he gets a lot of his support on this from the fundamentalist groups. Fundamentalist religious groups.

Joan Beifuss- Well he gets enough here that he keeps on that radio station.

Bill Ross- Yeah, large number of them in here.

Joan Beifuss- Well can you tie the Birch society in with the fundamentalist groups in a city like Memphis is it all tied in together?

Bill Ross- You can tie the John Birch Society into certain segments of the fundamentalist groups, for instance Harding College sponsored a national education program and Harding College is a Church of Christ school. Now to put a blanket indictment on all fundamentalist groups would be wrong. There are some church of Christ organizations or congregations that are not sympathetic to the John Birch Society. IN fact the business it was very interesting at the time we were fighting the film, the anti-communist films here that the county health officer, I can't recall his name right now was on the board of directors of Harding College but who was a great believer in (muffled) of water. Which is one of John Birch's pet peeves and all the other right wing organizations as far as that concerns.

Joan Beifuss- Bill in the early 60's here when the integration moves are made, when the fairgrounds are integrated and the zoo and what not. Does movement like that elicit responses from the groups like the Birch Society or the citizen councils?

Bill Ross- To my knowledge there was no organized opposition to any of the integration movement made here or made very quietly and the John Birch Society at that time did not want to be identified as anti-negro and went to great lengths to keep from being identified but with any of the racial hate groups, even to such extent that in their voter review section that they published in the middle 60's they chose a negro here in Memphis, as one of its endorsers, reverend J.L. Ward and nobody has been able to locate him. He claims that the John Birch Society is one of the greatest organizations in the world today. It is not subversive, its concern is for justice for all and the peace and dignity of everyone. The statement was made in August 29, 1964. This is interesting in the recent television program by police and



fire director Holloman he quoted from a book by W. Clennan Scowden the Naked Communist. Who was also included in the (muffled) section of the John Birch Society. Galston had this to say of the John Birch Society. I certainly would have no quarrel with anyone who wishes to disagree with some idea, (muffled) by the John Birch Society. In a republic this should be expected however no American should stand by and see a legitimate proof of American citizens dishonestly ridiculed and smeared at the instigation of the international communist conspiracy.

Joan Beifuss- DO you think the John Birch Society is still attempting not to be identified as anti-negro?

Bill Ross- They make every effort possible however many of their members belong to groups that are known to be anti-negro and anti-Jew. (muffled).(Tape Break)

Bill Ross- In 1962 Group research and its fact sheet on W. Cleon Scowden whose address at that time was 2197 Berkeley St. Salt Lake City, Utah. It doesn't say about his employer. J. Bracken Lee then mayor of Salt Lake City Dismissed Glaven as the chief of police. He said Lee the man is an insipient Hitler. I am a devoted anti-communist and I agree with the ends Mr. Scowden has to achieve but both his motives and his means are open to question. He ran the police department in Salt Lake City in exactly the same manner as the communists in Russia operate their government. He was wasteful of public funds and viewed his power to such an extent that I was forced to publicly discharge him from this position. He is a master of half-truths and will not hesitate to portray and outright lie because it would further his personal ambitions. I have served for over 20 years in the executive past end government. I might also add that while I am proud of this record the one act that I am the most proud of is the one in which I publicly discharged W. Cleon Scowden as chief of police of Salt Lake City. Quote from the East Bay Labor Journal Oakland California, January 1962.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now Bill Holloman quoted that Friday night television broadcast, where is Holloman getting material like this to quote in a televisions broadcast?

Bill Ross- Well, it is my opinion That most of your ex-FBI people are, have (muffled) leanage.

Joan Beifuss- Why?

Bill Ross- Now this is a good question, why? Certainly not due to their training certainly not due to the fact possibly is that this country has spent so much doggone time fighting communism and have shut their eye tot eh danger on the right wing, the fascist organizations. And I think some of it is out of pure ignorance, lack of knowledge of what the right wing is composed of. See so few people understand the difference between, I mean the short distance or the minute difference between fascism and communism. There is very little difference, they are both totalitarian governments.

Joan Beifuss- So what you are saying we are flying into the argument that your ex-FBI men lean sort of toward the right because they know the dangers of the left then?

Bill Ross- That's right. They don't understand the dangers of the right. A good example of that is in 1965 when we had a newspaper here started in the daily field by (muffled). Seton was an admitted communist, in fact...

Joan Beifuss- Started in Memphis?

Bill Ross- Yes. Back during, he amidst he was a communist back during the late 30's and early 40's. He made that short step from the far left to the far right.

Joan Beifuss- I didn't get you he started an anticommunist newspaper here?

Bill Ross- No he started a far right newspaper in here a daily newspaper, started out in the Sunday Times and tried to make it in a daily and it didn't get there and this was in 1965.

Joan Beifuss- Here in Memphis?

Bill Ross- Here in Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Who was Seton Ross?

Bill Ross- Here is his whole background.

Joan Beifuss- Is he someone who lived in Memphis or did he come in here to do that?

Bill Ross- Seton Ross of the Sunday times newspaper had adopted an editorial policy to follow the ultra conservative and should be considered anti union at this point. I don't even remember writing that. Ross came to his country at the age of 10 from Western Poland. His name was originally Rosenstein his father was member of the garment workers union, he was educated in the Bronx. One time he had testified that he was born raised and educated in Kentucky. He changed his name to Laurence Seton Baxter Ross and became active in the communist party. He was an active member from 1913 to 1937 and was editor of the Western Worker the communist paper in San Francisco California. Ross later became an organizer for the (muffled) union in the Carolinas and was discharged in 1941. After leading the labor movement he edited the Daily Courier Democrat in Russellville Arkansas. During this time Francis Hick the owner and editor of the cotton trade journal and a very wealthy man brought him to this firm as assistant editor of his publication. Hickman is well known in Memphis and has been connected with large (muffled) Hickman building and the Parkway Hotel. Ross bought the Cotton Trade Journal from Hickman and continued right wing editorial policy of the publication and had been established by Hickman. July 4, 1958 he published an editorial on how to listen, let us take stock. Which was an attack on our foreign policy for which the freedom foundation, and conservative organization gave him an honor certificate. Very frequently on public affairs forums in the late 1950's and several debates on foreign policy and foreign trade and always took the conservative side. Ross is also

publisher of the (muffled) press, a right wing newspaper that his father and the Birch Society thinking in its editorial policies. Cotton trading journal (muffled)...

Joan Beifuss- Is he still the editor of the Whitehaven newspaper?

Bill Ross- No, he lost everything financially when the Sunday Times folded.

Joan Beifuss- Was he trying to operate a Sunday Times out of Whitehaven?

Bill Ross- No he was publishing down here at the tri-state press.

Joan Beifuss- Oh how long did that last?

Bill Ross- About 6 months.

Joan Beifuss- Can you give us an overall picture of what's happening here. The klan or whatever part of the klan that is operating here is located where? Frayser?

Bill Ross- Two segments of the klan operating now one in Frayser and one in Whitehaven airport area.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know who the leaders of the klan are in those two areas?

Bill Ross- The leadership in the klan has been very well guarded. Now we know who the leaders are in the John Birch Society. And some of the other conservative organizations, but the klan has kept its leadership well guarded.,

Joan Beifuss- Do you have any idea how many members the klan has?

Bill Ross- No idea what so ever.

Joan Beifuss- The klan had a radio program on last year. Seems to me they used, operating our of Memphis?

Bill Ross- A daily, regular program?

Joan Beifuss- They had a when we first moved down here two years ago they had a program on Saturdays from 12:00 to 12:30 and I don't know what station and it kept getting shorter and shorter then it went down to 15 minutes and then it was a 5 minute program and then it disappeared entirely.

Bill Ross- I wasn't aware of this.

Joan Beifuss- I am sure names were used when people spoke on that but I...

Tom Beckner- Remember what station it was one?

Bill Ross- No. I was so amazed to find it. Well would you consider the klan an influence in this community at this time?

Bill Ross- Oh the klan had such no, actually the klan don't have to have done have to begin (muffled) the background of the majority of the people are of, have leads in this direction. This is evident by this (muffled) the man doesn't have to be active other than to keep things (muffled).

Tom Beckner- Keep things going.

Joan Beifuss- Would you think there would be any tie in between the klan activity here and the Mississippi klan activity.

Bill Ross- How much interchanging of ideas or activities is any tie in it is hard to say. I would say that yes they know what each other doing, but as far as being any organizational connection I doubt it, the klan doesn't operate that way.

Tom Beckner- I wonder is there any significance in the fact that the klan had moved their headquarters, they used to be in Brownsville, Tennessee office or headquarters, the klan?

Bill Ross- It shifts around as the leaders change.

Tom Beckner- I (muffled) I just wondered if this was a leadership change or whether Memphis had lost influence.

Bill Ross- No this designates a change in leadership, however there are two elements of the klan in Tennessee one in the eastern and one in the western and as far as I know or have been able to find out there really is not rivalry between the two but on the other hand there are no connections. The people that brought when they had the school integration in Clinton, and what about that guy's name they brought in that stirred that trouble up there. (muffled) Very good account of, but they imported trouble makers, klan imported trouble makers in, we hadn't seen any of this kind of trouble here you know.

Joan Beifuss- Well then as a blanket statement at this point would you say the attitude of the Memphis community was not visioned by klan thinking?

Bill Ross- No it's...by their natural anti-negro, it just comes natural for people from the south.

Joan Beifuss- Ok how about the influence of the Birch Society in this community?

The influence of the Birch community in this community is stronger than most people think in as much as here again the community is basically conservative. The money that the, many of the leaders of the Birch Society and the community have definitely have influence. You can't have 5 or 6 or 7 millionaires who are known, who were known members of the John Birch Society, two or three of them are dead. Without having a great deal of influence on (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- You say millionaires are you talking about people like Snowden...

Bill Ross- Snowden...

Tom Beckner- Is Turner still active?

Bill Ross- Condon out of American snuff, T. Walker Lewis who is now dead, Horace Home who is now dead, these are people that are known to be extremely wealthy.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have any idea how many Birch cell groups are operating here?

Bill Ross- At one time in the middle of 60 and 63 and 64 it was reported there was as high as 32.

Joan Beifuss- What about now you have any idea?

Bill Ross- I would say that there are possibly that many or more now.

Joan Beifuss- You have any information about how the cell groups operate her, what size they are?

Bill Ross- The John Birch Society always operate with the idea that they can be more effective through small groups. And the information I have is that when a cell reaches 15 to 20 they split off and there is no connection between any of the two cells. They do not (muffled) once they break off. Each cell acting completely autonomous from the other cells. But they have absolutely no economy when it comes to there dealings with the (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Then there is no in each city there is no simple committee of leaders of cell groups?

Bill Ross- No.

Joan Beifuss- Then one hand doesn't know what the other hand is doing?

Bill Ross- That's right.

Joan Beifuss- Ok can you locate any of the cells geographically?

Bill Ross- Not as of today I could 3 or 4 years ago but I haven't been that close.

Joan Beifuss- Where were they 3 or 4 years ago?

Bill Ross- There was two, one operating in the vicinity of Memphis State. Another one in the vicinity of Overton High School. Another one around (Muffled). One was meeting regularly at the Copper Street Mission. Operated by (muffled) this was T. Walker Lewis'.

Joan Beifuss- Who is T. Walker Lewis?

Bill Ross- Lewis and (muffled), two years ago. And of course the meetings of the cells move house to house it is hard to pinpoint it.

Joan Beifuss- Well now how about Father Clary in Whitehaven?

Bill Ross- Father Clary swears he is not a Birchman that is an active member as such he just claims that his ideas coincide with the thinking of the Birch group. But from his writings you can tell he is quoting a lot from the (muffled) that was put out by the Birch Society.

Joan Beifuss- When did the American (muffled) books come in here.

Bill Ross- 1964 or 65.

Joan Beifuss- Would that be the principle place that material would be (muffled) from.

Bill Ross- Yes. (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Do you know of any of the men who were active in the Birch Society in say East Memphis? Can you name any names?

Bill Ross- Not at this time, they have a system of rotating where you would think that one is no longer active kind of over on the ground so to speak, and another leader comes forward and to pinpoint who the people are is most difficult. You can do it, there is one way you can do it if you have the time. Two very popular bumper stickers they use. One like the mayor used during his campaign the yellow and black one that says support our boys in Vietnam, and the blue and white ones that said support your local police.

Joan Beifuss- Is that, the new group about supporting local police is that a Birch front too?

Bill Ross- This is just identification more or less. These bumper stickers are used very (muffled) slogans like this that identifies.

Joan Beifuss- What about now for instance the Lawson hate sheets that were distributed. Can it be assumed that those came out of John Birch Societies?

Bill Ross- I would say very definitely, since each one of them took a little different format that this was done by individual cells that expressed border of Welsh. (muffled) From his orders there is nothing democratic about the way the John Birch Society operates.

Joan Beifuss- But those hate sheets off hand used the same source material.

Bill Ross- Same material it was all furnished out of the headquarters with the express instructions that they prepare and make this an issue.

Tom Beckner- (muffled) it is very simple, civil rights.

Bill Ross- Where they got their Ruston material.

Tom Beckner- They had quite about King too early.

Bill Ross- King and of course it is not, it wasn't hard to get this stuff up on Jim Lawson and in fact if they had gone after Jim he would have told them.

Tom Beckner- You know anything about this Epoc group? Any published one of their sheets, e-p-o-c-h. No e-p-o-c, enlightened people on communism.

Bill Ross- Oh that is a Birch front...

Tom Beckner- I knew it was I just wondered if you had any...

Bill Ross- That is just the one of the names that one of the groups happened to put on that piece of literature.

Tom Beckner- They had a post office box somewhere in south Memphis.

Bill Ross- The voices of Ridge, there is one out of, on the same stuff out of..

Tom Beckner- Forrest City.

Bill Ross- Forrest City.

Tom Beckner- Yes I have seen those.

Bill Ross- Here is your enlightened people on communism her. Here is another one.

Tom Beckner- This is the one that had the post office box.

Joan Beifuss- Is it possible to categorize for instance the meeting at St., Louis where Rabbi Wax spoke and Odell Horton spoke, when people get up and ask questions that are taken right from this sheets and what not can you assume that those people are tied into the Birch Society or..

Bill Ross- It is assumed you have to assume that they were sent there with prepared questions as an activity of their specific cell.

Joan Beifuss- That would...

Bill Ross- That would identify them as a member of the John Birch Society.

Joan Beifuss- Did I tell you about the guy in the lobby who was taping with a little tape recorder under his coat would you assume that also that is...

Bill Ross- Yeah and of course here again they operate through all these front organizations. If you ask them are they a member of the John Birch Society they will deny it but they might be a member of one of their front organizations.

Joan Beifuss- Well now also the...

Bill Ross- This is the only, this right here when Julia Brown came here in February 1966 was the only joint effort I have ever seen as the John Birch Society as a whole in Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Did you say you thought the citizen's councils were not longer operating as such.

Bill Ross- There as very little activity by organized activity by the white citizen's council.

Joan Beifuss- I wondered because Jack at the white station library about a month ago was invited to a meeting of white citizen's being held in the library and he didn't go and I wondered if that was the white citizen's council or if that was a...

Bill Ross- Possibly was, there are some still over here however I much rather deal with them, they are more open in their deeds that is the Birch Society or the klan.

Joan Beifuss- Ok I still want to get back tot hat Holloman thing last Friday night I don't understand how that could have happened, a responsible police official on a television program getting up and quoting without knowing what he was doing.

Bill Ross- Oh there was no doubt in my mind the man knows he was quoting from a far right writer. And there is no doubt in my mind what he was and aware of the repercussions he might get from some of the more liberals in the community. But let's face it this is the way the majority of the community thinks.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now does the activity of (muffled) Birch Society merely strengthen then an already existing attitude?

Bill Ross- Sure.

Joan Beifuss- They are not molding the opinion they are merely strengthening it?

Bill Ross- Merely strengthening it. When the mayor can campaign with a John Birch bumper sticker on his car and get elected, why you can understand some things about he majority. I am not saying that the John Birch Society has all that many members but this represents their basic philosophy. In other wards the community is still basically Anglo Saxon protestants.

Joan Beifuss- What would be the tie in between the Wallace campaign and the Birch societies?

Bill Ross- Well, the Birch attempt to (muffled). Certainly Wallace will never refute the John Birch Society, because this is where his backing is coming from the right wing and the hate groups.

Joan Beifuss- The other thing I still don't understand is why no one has done the expose of the John Birch Society, especially with so much hate literature floating



around in the community. Why no one has attempted to bring all this to the surface and name names?

Bill Ross- Well the people that are really interested in it are the ones that are really concerned about the activity (Muffled). On such a small minority here but for the most part don't want to run the risk of actually starting an active campaign because most of us have been accused of being communists and left wingers and what not. Well to really put on an effective campaign that would be, get the job done we would almost have to resort to the same tactics that they did.

Tom Beckner- It is so hard to fight these people in particular the community like this because they are really going to eat anything that comes out against you.

Joan Beifuss- What about continually through the garbage strike, you have people getting harassment phone calls continually.

Bill Ross- Now this was a tactic started to be used early by the John Birch Society when they would set up telephone committees and harass people around the clock. I have been on one of them where they tie up my office phone every 15 minutes and ring my office phone every 15 minutes and ring my home phone every 15 minutes. This type of thing and then actually to call up and be oh slanderous or vulgar actually I don't contribute this to the John Birch Society. This is the activity of more like the klansmen they would call and the first thing they would call you is a nigger lover. Now if a John Bircher calls you up why he is going to accuse you of being part of the communist conspiracy. Now he might not call you a communist, he is going to say you are part of the communist conspiracy. When a member of the white citizen calls you he will talk in (muffled) and try to give you an intelligent reason. This is the difference between the three groups.

Joan Beifuss- Scaling up economically that would put the klan on the bottom economically and the white citizen's council sort of the middle class and the Birch Society is the upper? Is that the way to divide it?

Bill Ross- That's the way I would divide it.

Joan Beifuss- Is there a possibility on these, or would you think on these phone calls, what struck me was a couple of people who got harassing phone calls are over a period of time they would start and there would be many many many calls and then on a certain date they would stop and that would be the end of it. Is it possible they issued lists of people to call and then issued an updated list and you would quit calling people ones on first list.

Bill Ross- One person is given a number of calls to make and then once that person has made that number of calls then he quits.

Joan Beifuss- Then was there much hate literature about King being circulated here before he came in April?

Bill Ross- No this right here was, you see way more King see this was 1963 but the white citizen's council, the American citizen's council on King. So we have had some of this all the time.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have the faintest idea why the newspapers continually print extremely right wing letters unsigned when surely they know they are coming from some kind of an organized source.

Bill Ross- Well it is my opinion that yes, they very definitely know that the its an organized effort. Frankly I think some of the editorial staff at the Commercial Appeal very definitely used to work at the John Birch Society. I think possibly that some of the editors...

Joan Beifuss- Can you name names?

Bill Ross- Hmm.

Joan Beifuss- Can you name names?

Bill Ross- Of course like everything else I can't prove it no more than they could prove it but whether they are trying to foster their own feelings or whether they think they are displaying the feelings of the majority of the community it is hard to say. Here for instance, here is a letter written by Snowden himself. It was published in the Commercial Appeal in support of the John Birch Society.

Joan Beifuss- Would the Birch Society in general would you assume that the Birch Society would be against integration or would merely be against negros like Lawson who they could attach the communist label too?

Bill Ross- That is primarily it they will say that they are not segregationists or they are not anti-negro but they will turn right around on the other hand and say that the civil rights movement is a effort of the communist conspiracy top overthrow the government, this is the way they approach it.

Joan Beifuss- Is there any way of telling what they basic motivation is, anti-negro, or anti-communism?

Bill Ross- Well it is hard to say there is so much integration of the leaders of the far-right organizations. I have a chart over there, they are all interwoven. A leader in an out and out anti-negro organization will be a leader in either the John Birch Society or one of its many front organizations. They are all interlocking.

Joan Beifuss- Does the John Birch Society or any of these groups do they take labor as a frequent target.

Bill Ross- They are all anti-labor.

Joan Beifuss- So what are they then they are anti-communist, anti-labor, anti-what else?

Bill Ross- They are anti-negro, anti-Jew..

Joan Beifuss- (Muffled)

Bill Ross- There again, first say it isn't but there is so much integration of the leaders of the anti-Jewish organizations in John Birch front groups that how can you draw a line how can you make a distinction? November the 15gth 1965 the Commercial Appeal ran a 5 column spread on the John Birch Society. Welsch's hand even got small Memphis units and it goes here to list and break it down.

Joan Beifuss- I was going to say Welsch's hand guides Memphis small (muffled).

Bill Ross- Well here it lists Bill Nash who was on their speakers bureau as one of the leaders. Yeah I need to g4et all this stuff bad. Why don't you (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Outside? We will take it .

Bill Ross- Catalogue it for me so I can know what I got. But I think that anything, if you are interested in anything in the right wing I think this is a good article.

Joan Beifuss- I would be more interested in the right wing to the extent that the right wing is an influence on the city of Memphis.

Bill Ross- Well it definitely is an influence. The Commercial Appeal wouldn't devote 5 full columns on this section page if they didn't think it was...(muffled).

Tom Beckner- By the way I asked you about this WRS, it is White Rescue Services.

Bill Ross- Oh.

Joan Beifuss- White Rescue Service?

Bill Ross- White Rescue Service yeah sure that's on this...

Tom Beckner- It was on this klan newsletter that I got.

Joan Beifuss- And it was on the Jim Lawson hate sheet?

Tom Beckner- No it was on this hate sheet on the Shelby United Neighbors or the Soviet United Negroes, as it says it should be called.

Bill Ross- On November the 20<sup>th</sup> 1965, the John Birch Society ran a full page and in the commercial appeal. This is on a Sunday. That is when they brought in Allen Stang.

Tom Beckner- He wrote very simple.

Bill Ross- Hmm.

Tom Beckner- He wrote experience simple.

Bill Ross- Yeah.

Tom Beckner- That's the one that got all the rush (muffled)..

Bill Ross- Very Simple the true story of civil rights.

Tom Beckner- Yeah.

Bill Ross- He is tied directly in but in a roundabout way.

Joan Beifuss- Bill can you talk for a few minutes we will use the term liberal, the liberals here. What is the coalition of the liberals here.

Bill Ross- Let's face it there are so few liberals that are active.

Joan Beifuss- Where do you find them?

Bill Ross- In a small group in the educators primarily on the college university level. Very few if any on the elementary level.

Tom Beckner- I am a witness to that.

Joan Beifuss- Tom was a school teacher.

Bill Ross- There are some in labor, I suppose the majority of, no I wouldn't even say the majority are religious. Are religious connection. You can go to so called liberal functions and you will see the same 50 or 75 people at all of them.

Joan Beifuss- Is that were you put it 100 liberals in Memphis?

Bill Ross- That's about the size of them I think.

Joan Beifuss- Well do you think there are more people who are inclined that way but are afraid because of harassing phone calls or because of this organized activity by the right wing.

Bill Ross- Well that is one thing and two we know there are more people here if we could actually put on a good substantial campaign but so many of them don't want to become involved they feel strongly about it. The American opinion bookstore was opened here in June 1965. (Tape Break)

Bill Ross- Letter by this reverend Milton, when we were, when they forced him to close the swimming pools here and he had trouble there.

Joan Beifuss- Bill is there any kind of coalition that could be achieved between the negroes and the white liberals to counteract conservative?

Bill Ross- What now?

Joan Beifuss- Is there any kind of coalition that could be achieved between the negro community and the white liberal community so called.

Bill Ross- Oh definitely there need s to be a coalition between the negro community labor and intellectual liberals. This is the ideal situation.

Joan Beifuss- Is that possible here?

Bill Ross- Yes it is in fact the (muffled) I think it was demonstrated when we elected George Fryer. And I think we could have continued to if they hadn't gerrymandered us out of it. When they redid the congressional (muffled). But I think it is still possible and there is still evidence of certain amount of coalition between the 3 groups. There hasn't been enough another group is the Jewish community, well the Jewish community here is split 3 ways. It hadn't been enough effort on the part of the liberal movement to include the Jewish element.

Joan Beifuss- Well if I were a liberal and I moved to Memphis and I wanted to find people of like mind where would I go?

Bill Ross- There is not place.

Joan Beifuss- What would join?

Bill Ross- Hmmm. 2 or 3 human relations councils that are active, the young democrats when they are functioning are primarily made up of liberals. But outside of that there are no organizations that are primarily liberals.

Joan Beifuss- How about the ACLU?

Bill Ross- The ACLU is such a young organization yet, it is only a year and a half. 2 years possibly. (muffled) ok.

Joan Beifuss- You think it is possible that Wallace is going to carry Shelby County?

Bill Ross- It is possible but I don't think so, I think that right now it is since he is in the race I think it is high probably that the democratic nominee will carry Shelby County, but I don't think the democratic nominee is going to be Mcray.

Joan Beifuss- I know you don't. You have your hang-ups too. Well is any hope for getting the city out of a conservative rut really? Or really out of a conservative racist..

Bill Ross- There is always a possibility how far off from realization is something else. There is a page out of Seton Ross's Sunday Times. There is a famous Bob James quote.

Joan Beifuss- What is that?

Bill Ross- Oh respectable people voted for him.

Joan Beifuss- Ok again just to get it down will you, form your point of view will you describe Memphis in a few well chose n words, the attitudes of the city.

Bill Ross- Basic attitudes of this city as far as the natives are concerned, I am talking about natives of the area. It is still and will continue to be basically all conservatives. The influx of people from other parts of the country has had a great deal to do with what little change has come about. And this really the real hope of the community is that enough migration from other sections of the country of more liberal thinking people have more to do with influencing the thinking of the community on one single factor. The fact that your college campuses, your faculties have a very definite conservative lean and a great deal to do with (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Would you say there has been a slowness or a hesitation here to bring in outside industry and what not for fear that it will change?

Bill Ross- The attitude of the chamber of commerce and the attitude of business leaders like here and much like all over the cotton section of the country where there philosophy up until 8 or 10 years ago that it was absolutely necessary to their well being to have a surplus of labor. This they felt was there insurance toward cheap labor and making a big profit. That's why they didn't want to bring in (Muffled). Then when the great mass migration of the farm workers left them with no alternative but to recognize. They when they did recognize they went all the way and now where we saw several years ago states passed legislation to prohibit the pirating of labor, anti-pirating laws. Where it was a state offense if you entice labor from another plantation. Now they are enabling them to leave by force. Now they are doing everything to drive the labor out of the rural area. Either by starvation or any other effort and this is proven by the fact that so many of them have not made any efforts to participate of the surplus food program. The surplus food program are food stamps.

Joan Beifuss- In your opinion is this new \$4million program the chamber of commerce is talking about going to make change here economically?

Bill Ross- I like to be an optimist but at the same time I have to be shown. MY experience with the chamber of commerce for the most part is that there are a bunch of windbags. They have a lot of mouth and damn little production.

Joan Beifuss- Who in your opinion really runs Memphis?

Bill Ross- I don't think you can say any one man or any one group controls Memphis now. I think this is our only salvation. Only salvation.

Joan Beifuss- That there is no one..

Bill Ross- That there is no one.

Joan Beifuss- Do the again politically speaking and I know you are an astute political observer, the old cotton people are they still a force here politically?

Bill Ross- Definitely not. They think they are and they try to be but they have very little influence here politically.

Joan Beifuss- And would it be almost with the large businesses, A. Plough like that?

Bill Ross- I would say that possibly if there is such a thing it would be locally owned medium sized business man had more influence on the community than one of those. These are the people that boast their ego. He is not nationally business oriented. He could care less about chain operations. He is local business oriented. This comes from the background out of the laundry he didn't want any part and still doesn't want any part in the laundry business. (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Well again I don't know if you can answer this but, for instance the negro unemployment rate here would heavy industry have to come in here in order to take up that slack?

Bill Ross- What do you mean by heavy industry.

Joan Beifuss- Large industries..

Bill Ross- You are talking about...

Joan Beifuss- Industries that employ say 5,000 people on an assembly line or..

Bill Ross- Well that doesn't necessarily mean (muffled). To pick up the type of, or pick of the slack and the type of people we have in the community does not require an industry that demands highly skilled people. Our surface of labor (muffled) is unskilled or semi-skilled, and our educational institutions are not such that would make it a craft to explore industry that requires (muffled) or any kind of universities just have moved that far (muffled). They have come a long way in the last 5 years. But to crack industry that demands pre-engineering skills or chemicals or businesses this type of industry we don't have it.

Joan Beifuss- Are there many industries left now that don't demand..

Bill Ross- This is the reason that we have not been able to attract the type of industry. Memphis has everything outside of educational facilities, training facilities in any type of industry (muffled). Trainable personnel not (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Industry is considering a site, they consider whether or not the local community has training programs set up they are not?

Bill Ross- Or the ability to train. This community is just not (muffled). And the whole nation is going this way right now, it is the philosophy of the conservatives. They don't believe in spending money or investing money in (muffled) development programs. (Muffled).

Joan Beifuss- I am sorry talking to you you seem very pessimistic, I don't see any solutions.

Bill Ross- Well let's face it, we go through these periods, when do you putt he brakes on or when do you tell a conservative that by damn we are not going to allow you to

stop progress. This is what they want to do they want to stop the progress. And the best way to stop it is by golly cut all the money in human development programs. The whole realm of education. This is the best way in the world to stop poverty and they know it. And the first thing that they cut in all this slashing, they (muffled) they cut money and bills (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- But the city of Memphis never had much going in the familial of human development to be cut?

Bill Ross- And when you start cutting the national level, (muffled). What hurts even worse than that is the lack of a human development program in the outlying communities in the urban, in the rural areas around here that Memphis (muffled). The department of education in our rural schools is on such (muffled). That the children coming in here, the young people coming in here can't come through. High school diploma in most of your rural counties is not equal to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have the faintest idea about people at (muffled) college, do they come back into Memphis or do they go elsewhere.

Bill Ross- No, this is another thing that is disturbing to a lot of people that are really interested is that we are exporting 50% of our (muffled). 50% of the people that we spend money on educating can't find a market for their skills here. I don't believe my son is going to come back. I doubt if my daughter will. The money for their particular skill they can get much more else where.

Joan Beifuss- Well then when Time magazine said Memphis was a decaying backwater..

Bill Ross- You are not going to get me on that. But it is basically true.

Tom Beckner- It is particularly true in some areas of Memphis.

Bill Ross- Basically.

Joan Beifuss- Or at least backwater is not to King would you go with that?

Bill Ross- Well I don't think that the rotten has gotten tot eh core yet. But it is certainly, well let's put it this way, Memphis itself you are talking about the incorporated city limits, is not so bad. But when you consider the Memphis area then it became, let me see what you have to look at, look at Memphis of an area of 75 to 100 miles. I am tired. (Tape End)