

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

**AMBASSADOR THOMAS R. BYRNE**

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and  
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**INTERVIEW**

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Byrne]

*Q: Today is February 23, 2000. I am Don Kienzle, and I have the great privilege of interviewing Thomas Byrne for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project and the broader foreign affairs oral history project. Thank you very much, Tom, for agreeing to give an interview. This is really a part two, but we are really happy that you are willing*

*to take the time and talk to us. Shall we begin with your background, where you were born, your family and education?*

BYRNE: I was born in West Englewood, New Jersey on February 4, 1923. Shortly thereafter we moved to outside Chicago in Winnetka, Illinois, and stayed there until about eight years old, and then moved back to the New York area. My family lived, and some of them still live in White Plains, New York which is a suburb of New York City. I came from a large family; there were ten children, five boys and five girls. We came from a very mixed background as far as politics and philosophy went, and we used to have almost daily sometimes heated arguments over the dinner table over the current issues of the day. My brother had an influence on me as he was one of the early so called labor priests and worked in the New York City area. My father, on the other hand, was a life long Republican. In fact, my wife, when she first came into our family, thought that there was going to be a terrible situation because we were so heated in our arguments, not realizing that when we got up and left the table, it was as if it hadn't happened. In my education, in my earlier life, I had been for a period in the Jesuit seminary, but I left before theology. My education was I went to Iona Prep in New Rochelle, New York, and then I received my degree from Loyola University, and received a masters there too in history. Then I went on and taught a year at Canisius College in Buffalo. I then went to receive my doctorate in history at Georgetown University and did my thesis on Senator Wagner's social legislation. He had left his papers to the university. Washington was an ideal place to contact the many people who were closely involved in that. I also received a masters degree in economics and taught for a very short time, one summer, at Georgetown University graduate school. One of my students was Lane Kirkland [ed note: later head of the AFL-CIO].

*Q: Is that right. How about Jim Shea?*

BYRNE: Jim Shea I didn't have. This was a labor economics course. I didn't know Jim until later. I think my family maybe thought I was becoming a professional student. I then went to NBC New York and had an opportunity to work in the budding TV industry. I had a fancy title of associate TV producer which meant simply that I was there to make sure that everything went on time. I worked in connection with the Milton Berle program and the Saturday night Show of Shows where you had such stars as Jimmy Durante. I enjoyed that, but there came an opportunity to enter the trade union movement. I felt that after all my education this was more positive than TV where I was in the entertainment field. Had they put me in the news or special events an area which then did not exist to any large size, I probably would have stayed there. I went with the glass bottle blowers in Philadelphia.

*Q: This would have been about 1947?*

BYRNE: No, the very early 50's because I had taught and was getting my education. I should say I got my doctorate in 1951. I stayed there until about 1952, and then the AFL asked me to go abroad with the Organization for European Economic Cooperation.

*Q: Before we go there, could we backtrack just a little bit. Were there professors or individuals aside from your brother who particularly influenced your thinking on why you were interested in labor?*

BYRNE: Strangely enough, I had a very conservative professor, Goetz Brief, who had fled from Germany in 1932. He had said he was very anti communist, but in his class he said there was more sense in one page of Karl Marx's Das Kapital than there was in Mien Kampf.

*Q: Who was he?*

BYRNE: Goetz Brief. He was a very deep thinker. He had written books on the proletariat and such books but he was a conservative. He mentored my thesis, but in doing so, he helped me to think through things and using his principles, became more liberal while he was the conservative.

*Q: Sounds like the dialectic in action.*

BYRNE: It was, actually. When I wrote my thesis, I had another professor who had an effect on me. The two of them got into such a terrible heated argument over some of my thesis that they hardly ever asked me a question. I sat and refereed it. These were two of the people who had an effect on me. Then as I said, I went to the labor movement because I thought I should be in something more social minded. Lee Minton was the head of the glass bottle blowers. It was a small union. I was the research director there and education director. It was a very small union; they never had such a spot before so I was the big fish in a little pond. If you were in a bigger union it is different.

*Q: You were in Philadelphia?*

BYRNE: In Philadelphia, that's where they were headquartered.

*Q: Where was the industry located?*

BYRNE: The industry was largely located in Ohio and West Virginia and New Jersey because that was where you could get the raw materials. Owens-Illinois, for example, was the dominant figure in there, and Owens Corning. These were the people we had organized. We had an industry wide contract which I was to play the key role in negotiating. That's when I said a big fish in a small pond, that you were up there, sat at the head table, and they relied on you more heavily than I thought would be the case when I joined the union.

*Q: Was industry wide bargaining common at that time? Were you on the cutting edge?*

BYRNE: It was somewhat on the cutting edge. You did have some of it, well the steel union was not exactly industry wide. Auto would not be industry wide either, but you had such major components that when you did negotiate, it had impact on the others. But ours

was strictly industry. We had about 60,000 members. This was an excellent background for when I did go abroad. Now, I don't know if you want me to jump to going to the OEEC.

*Q: Get the transition.*

BYRNE: I used to attend a lot of meetings of the AFL in Washington at the time, both in the education and the labor field. I was selected to be the delegate to the UNESCO conference in Compiegne, France, which was just outside of Paris, on workers and adult education. It was about three weeks there. The CIO was not then part of the AFL. They had sent a man named Murray who happened to be related to the head of the union, Murray. He was their representative, and we spent about three weeks there.

*Q: You were the AFL representative?*

BYRNE: I was the U.S. representative, but since it was workers education I was selected and it was State Department sponsored. I was selected and I represented the U.S. government for the labor movement.

*Q: And at that point you director of...*

BYRNE: Research and education for the glass bottle blowers. At that conference, my first daughter was born. At the same time the American atomic spies were convicted, the Rosenbergs. They had been convicted at the time, and all of the European trade union movement was up against the United States. So I was in a very difficult position. Instead of being there for education, Andre Phillipe, who was the keynote speaker and one of the big ministers in the French government, was attacking the U.S. I was the young man defending the U.S. It was a great experience, but it was also something that stood me in good stead later on. What united the conference was when my daughter was born, everybody got into the act making sure the telephone messages got through. The former Prime Minister of France Leon Blum's widow was attending the conference, and she went out immediately and bought the first gift for my daughter.

*Q: Your daughter was born here.*

BYRNE: Born in the United States.

*Q: The timing left something to be desired.*

BYRNE: It was interesting how a human situation can soften and inject, and this was the case. It was an international conference.

*Q: That would have been about 1953?*

BYRNE: It had to have been '53, because in '54 I left to go to Paris. I guess as a direct result of that, the AFL asked me to go abroad as one of their representatives. John

Daugherty also went over, and Woody Ginsburg went over with that team. There were six of us there for 18 months, and we were the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in Paris which then had this trade union program in productivity. I found it a very exciting experience. I was able to set up a magazine which we had no budget for. But we got a lot of people dug in for these things, and it was amazing. We got somebody in Holland to do the photographic work for us and somebody else to lay it out for us all for almost nothing because there was no budget. In fact, I was called in and told that this was going to come out of my salary. But some Congressmen saw the magazine and thought this was the greatest thing since the wheel, so we had a lot of fathers to this project. That was the end of me having to pay for it.

*Q: This was not the USIA (United States Information Agency).*

BYRNE: No this was the OEEC labor productivity, and it was done in several languages. The translation was done for almost nothing. I went around and got people in Europe who were at the agency or whatnot, interested in doing this. Then we got them to contribute articles for nothing. For example, Fletcher who was head of the research department in TUC, he came through for me. It widened my scope of contacts. You might have known them just cursorily, but when you personally get involved with them, got them into something like that, they sometimes become stronger acquaintances. Later on when I was in London as a labor attaché, Fletcher over at the TUC was always a great friend of mine and always assisted. He'd take me out to British type athletic contests to extend my cultural background as well as the trade union. Anyway this went on for 18 months. Morrie Weiss was not connected directly with this but was with FOA or AID or whatever it was at the time, so therefore I did have some connections with Morrie at the time. We had the trade union seminars and the usual things, education programs plus this magazine. We traveled. At least I saw quite a bit of Europe as a result of it. I was to negotiate with Greece to get them involved. They were very polite on their part with me, and they were not telling me no, but they wouldn't tell me yes, thinking I would pack my bag and go home. I signed up for a tour for two weeks. When they found that out, they said you are not going away, so we will sign up and cooperate with the program.

*Q: Did you also cover Germany and Scandinavia?*

BYRNE: We covered all the OEEC countries. For example, I can remember very clearly with Woody Ginsburg, giving a seminar with the German trade union miners. I'll never forget that, because they not only wanted what we had on the agenda, but they insisted that we give something during breakfast and something in the evening. Woody went, we both went quickly out separately to go buy presents for our children, and Woody forgot to tell me the exact title of what he was talking about. The Germans did not want to waste time, and fortunately I guessed and wrote the right program. We knew from ahead of time, but I wasn't sure what one he had covered. So anyway that was the example. And we had other programs throughout, but I remember that one very specifically and enjoyed working with Woody very much on that. As I said, we worked throughout Europe and also the ILO. Several Europeans were on the staff with us at the OEEC, so we also worked with a team, not just the Americans. It was not an American project as such.

*Q: What kinds of topics did you handle in the education program?*

BYRNE: One thing was getting them interested in issues like the value of productivity and how it could be used to the unions' advantage. For example, the garment workers, you know time-study type of thing. In Germany we would show them, they wanted to learn how to set up a union and run the union. That was when they were just recovering from the war and all, the holocaust and what have you. They wanted to set it up right even though their approach was different from ours as you are aware, the big unions that covered specific industries. They only had about 15 or 16 at the time. For example, down in Sicily, I held a program which was entirely different because I learned cultural differences, and you have to take into account what the situation is. Sicily at that time in the early 50's was very poor. When I went in there to help them I said, what do you want from your employers. They said, "A chicken for Christmas." Well that taught me I was not going to give them the world, but you had to start from certain things and build on their territory. So it was a great education process for me. We had similar programs in Holland and the other countries. As a result of all that, I was asked to consider becoming labor attaché in Paris. Ambassador Bruce had gotten the word that he wanted me to go there.

*Q: Ambassador David Bruce.*

BYRNE: They also came and interviewed me because Tom Lane in Rome was leaving. However, I had decided that I had only come over for 18 months. We weren't sure as a family what we wanted to do. I thought it was better to go back to the U.S. In any case I resigned. So when I came back, the timing was perfect. The Stephenson campaign and the Democratic National Committee were setting up for the 1956 election.

*Q: So this would have been in the '55-'56 time frame.*

BYRNE: It would have been almost '56. When I first came back, Tom Holler at the Labor Department assigned me to short time consulting work at the St. Johns program in Maryland. Then the Democratic National Committee was setting up their national program. They had four divisions. One was for agriculture; one was for labor; one was for small business and one was for energy. Surprisingly the CIO agreed to go along with my nomination.

*Q: Actually just one thing on the record, the glass blowers I presume were AFL?*

BYRNE: Yes. When I came back I did not go back to them because I had cut my ties with them. They had another person in place which I always felt should be. You get a decent person in there. So then I came and worked over there at St. Johns. The president of St. Johns gave me a very nice letter. I also lectured in addition to the labor program. I talked in the special books program. Their course was built on...

*Q: The great books modeled on the University of Chicago.*

BYRNE: Yes, correct. That was their program, so I was asked to come in several times and lecture on whatever.

*Q: Was John Daugherty there?*

BYRNE: John Daugherty was with the labor program very definitely. I had been with John in Paris. So then I went in to the Democratic National Committee in March. No later than that; I had come back in time for Christmas in '55. Then in '56. I was surprised that I was able to get the CIO endorsement also. They gave me their sign of approval which would have caused a problem if they hadn't.

*Q: Any reason or insight on why they did give you their approval?*

BYRNE: I'm not sure. I guess they were not unhappy with what I had done abroad, but I still was surprised. I cannot remember the gentleman from south Texas who ran the political division at that time. He gave me his approval. George Harrison of the railway brotherhood was the head of the labor movements committee with the Democratic National Committee.

*Q: Did you head this committee?*

BYRNE: I was the executive director. When Stephenson was nominated, I was up on the stage with him.

*Q: That must have been exciting.*

BYRNE: It was. We went through the committee. Now, Stephenson was a very interesting character. I used to write some of his speeches. I was a great admirer of Stephenson; that is why I was happy to be there. But I had one problem with Adlai. I'd say there is a speech you are going to give to a small little gathering in Peoria. This line or this paragraph is the only one to worry about. Well, he would go through the whole thing. He would improve it, but I often wondered if he should spend that much time on something that wasn't really important in the total picture. Estes Kefauver was the vice presidential nominee and I could have given him a telephone book and he would have read it. So when you wrote one, you had the two extremes. But it was a fascinating time, and there is a very interesting story afterwards. Unfortunately, we knew that Eisenhower was the great white father and was going to be very difficult if not impossible to defeat. I mean you could tell as you went around the country. But you gave it your college try. One of the key jobs I had at the convention was I wrote the labor platform. Now there was competition. If you have ever been in any of these political campaigns for who does what and who gets the paper in. John McCormick was the key guy for the labor platform running the hearings and whatnot. I figured out, I am not going to get into all the hassle of these guys pushing and shoving. I just have a feeling if I stay out of it, I am going to get a telephone call. I may be making a very big mistake. I get a call about ten o'clock one night. "Get down here, the speaker wants to talk to you." So I came. He said, "Would

you write the labor platform." So I did it all. I cheated on one little thing. I made the minimum wage suggestion just a few cents under what I knew the AFL-CIO's position was figuring that would give George Meany a chance to say something when they came up. Otherwise I adapted most if not all of what they wanted. You knew that was the thing to do, but I left the one little thing. That would give him his chance to think that it was really worth his time coming.

*Q: What were the major issues at that time for labor in the platform?*

BYRNE: I should have pulled that out ahead of time. Minimum wage, social security, the usual ones they have, even education.

*Q: The Taft Hartley Act?*

BYRNE: Certainly that was the labor legislation that would have been important. Without checking, I am sure the health and welfare and the OSHA type things would have been important. It ran the usual gamut.

*Q: Just one other question. Did you speak of broader social legislation such as the voting rights?*

BYRNE: No, to the best of my knowledge, that was not an issue.

In dealing we went around the country. I cooperated also with the labor movement's cope type of people. In most places we were allowed to play our role and they were delighted to be there. Incidentally the AFL's man was Phil Delaney. Phil and I had many years together. I worked later as a special assistant for him while he was there. In New York City, we had a very New York experience. I was sitting in my office in Washington preparing to go up to New York when a group of the labor political and trade union leaders connected with the Democratic party in that area came in and sat down and shut the door. They said to me, "Tom, we know you are a wonderful guy, but we recommend that you stay in your room and don't come out of it when you go to New York, because we are handling everything with the governor." That is Governor Adlai Stevenson. "Everything we are handling and we don't need any assistance." I reported that to the governor, and he said, "Unfortunately, I knew that type of thing would happen. Even if you had gone up there and tried to play a role, you wouldn't, but we appreciate the flagging of what has happened." We had a difficult campaign, and the Republicans won. One very interesting thing happened at the convention. I decided rather than sitting on the stage when Jack Kennedy spoke, I would go down underneath the stage where there was a TV camera and see this myself without being distracted. Kennedy gave the speech and it was a marvelous speech. I think that did as much to give him a running start as he could have had in actually running for the vice president. He gave his speech for the vice presidency nomination there which he didn't get, but he didn't hurt himself. He came down after, and I scared him quite a bit because I was in the dark. He was kind of breathing getting off and he didn't realize anyone was in there. That was my first introduction to JFK.

*Q: He did that on his own initiative didn't he at that point?*

BYRNE: Well he was pushing, yes.

*Q: I think Kefauver became the...*

BYRNE: Kefauver became the vice presidential nominee.

*Q: Was he named by Stevenson?*

BYRNE: Yes at that time and also the political leaders wanted him. You know how those things are done anyway. But already Kennedy's father was maneuvering to get him a nomination. They hoped maybe for him to become the vice president, this would have given him a big leg up. They hoped for that, but they were not unhappy with what happened. It went over so well. As I said he such was a marvelous and charismatic speaker that he could take a situation like that and not antagonize. So that was an interesting story of that time.

*Q: Can we ask one question here. I have heard that Stevenson was a very indecisive person. It was difficult to get him to make decisions in his campaign. I had a professor once who...*

BYRNE: Yes there was a certain amount. As I said, he got himself into piddling, changing the paper, spending his time on that rather than getting down to the strategy. Not that what he put into the paper wasn't often important or not, but that is what he tended to do.

I could tell you another little local color story about when I knocked Harry Truman down at the convention. I had a couple of tickets, and I was outside. Harry was, as you know, much smaller than I was. I am a big man. I am looking over like this, and Harry comes, and the both of us collide and Harry goes flying. Well the Secret Service comes out of no-where, but Charlie Murphy, remember the postmaster general, he had been a big one. I knew Charlie well, and Charlie was with the President. The President knew what had happened. He was apologetic that he had run into me and I am apologetic there, and the Secret Service thought they really had something. Thank goodness for Charlie. He gave them this, Oh, no, this is Tom Byrne, he is part of our team, but it was a rather odd way to run into Harry Truman.

*Q: Had you known him before?*

BYRNE: No, I had not known Harry before. I thought Harry was one of our great presidents, but I did not know him. I'm sorry I didn't, even though, as I said, I met him and knocked him off his feet.

*Q: I have never heard a story quite like that one before.*

BYRNE: Again after that, there is nothing deader than a politician when he loses a campaign, and there is nothing deader than his staff. So, on the morning after the election, once again I was looking for a position. That was in November. In December, the teamsters started to come after me to chat with me. I worked directly for Tom Flynn who was a great Irishman. He had worked for Tobin when Tobin was in Indianapolis. At that time he was with the eastern conference.

*Q: That was Tobin who was head of the teamsters not Tobin who was Secretary of Labor.*

BYRNE: Dan Tobin not Maurice Tobin. He had a long background within the teamsters. He had a drinking problem. Tom would have probably run the teamsters but because he had a drinking problem, it put him out at the crucial moment. But, it was great to work for him because he was a brilliant fellow as far as a leader and knew the movement, and gave you a lot of leeway if he trusted you. So, I came in and at that time, thought I was going back into the foreign service. There was an assistant secretary for international labor affairs, a Republican.

*Q: George Lodge?*

BYRNE: No, before George Lodge. He was at UNESCO. George Lodge I knew very well, and George was great. This man was not. He said, "As long as I am alive, this man Byrne will never get back into the government." He was an Eisenhower appointee and he knew I had been with the Democratic National Committee. Well, here is a very good Stevenson story. Stevenson finds this out. Stevenson was doing some work for the government at the time. They had asked him, I don't remember whether it was the UN or where he had been asked to do something. He calls me at the teamsters and said, "I understand someone is interfering with," well you know politicians, brilliant career and all of this. He said, "If they don't take you back, I quit what I am doing." I said, "Oh Governor, I deeply appreciate and I think it reflects why I have so much for you because you are not only a leader but you are a great human being. But I am having so much fun here at the teamsters that I wouldn't give it up." Secondly, the teamsters at the time were very powerful within every city. I said, "No matter what I do on a phone call or what I do on a visit, people are going to listen to me because if it is related to what I am doing. I find this fascinating, and also it is a great experience." I said, "Number two, I don't want to go back into the government over a political fight because I do hope to go back some day, and I don't want it going back saying this is how I got back in." Though having said that, I appreciate it. It was a great honor to me. It was great the way this man operated. Stevenson was a fine person. Jumping ahead, I was talking to Stevenson shortly before he died in London when I was labor. He was over there meeting with us when he said he had a terrible headache. He walked out and fell dead going down the block just half a block away. Again here was an opportunity and here was a man who died that fast, just went on the sidewalk and died.

*Q: A cerebral hemorrhage.*

BYRNE: That's right.

I can tell you several things with the teamsters. My title was research director for the eastern conference. Whatever Tom Flynn got into he always said if we can't go first class, we don't go at all. So he built me up. I could hire whoever I wanted, any equipment I wanted, and he wanted me to build up the research department. We became the real research arm for the teamsters. We did all the trucking research. For all the details and industry wide studies, that type of thing, we did the research. The eastern conference had almost 700,000 members which was about 40% of the teamster membership. The teamsters were run as fiefdoms. Even though Jimmy Hoffa was a power, the areas were all run by themselves except when you wanted to do industry wide bargaining in trucking or company wide bargaining with Safeway or these types of people. Then, of course, headquarters became powerful, and if it was a one on one, Jimmy would win. That is what some people never realized; how could they become uncontrolled at times and have the corruption and whatnot. Why couldn't they stop it at the top? Because it was run as fiefdoms and because they were all so powerful locally both politically and as an economic force, there was difficulty getting control from the top except on major industry wide or central topics.

*Q: Just one background question, was the eastern conference relatively clean compared to some of the others?*

BYRNE: We had some bad actors. We had Tony Pro in Jersey, Provenzano. He is the one they allege, if you ask me my guess, speculation because nobody knows for certain. Hardly anybody knows. I think he is the one responsible for killing Hoffa. You had Ray Kohn in Philadelphia, a bad actor. In New York City you had Johnny Dioguardi, they called him Johnny Dio. You had some really bad actors controlling Kennedy Airport. They had ways of getting stuff through customs and whatnot. So there were some bad actors, but Tom Flynn was flawless. When they had the Kennedy hearings, they brought him up there and they thought they had him. They said, "Oh, what did you get this furniture discount for from Sears?" He said, "There was a nun's convent that needed some furniture." Then we had Baker. Baker was a big heavy set fellow; he was a bad actor. There were a lot of bad actors. He was more central, he was from headquarters. Then we had the guy whose story is fabulous, out of New York. They had him. Bobby got him. Bobby Kennedy has this guy and he is really going in on him, and he is building his case up for what happened with one of the locals. I can't remember the fellow's name, but I can remember the situation. In some way or another as he is asking questions, this fellow is always getting in the fact that he took a drink, or he was acting dumb like a fox. So, finally Kennedy comes in on a catch on something, this guy I am going to have something that is going to pin Hoffa to the wall. He said, "Well Senators and Mr. Kennedy, I am so embarrassed. I was so drunk at that time I don't remember what happened." He didn't take the fifth. Another good story to show that not all teamsters were bad. You couldn't touch Tom Flynn, never did. Then Harold Gibbons. So we were over, Edward Bennett Williams was the lawyer for the teamsters at the time. So we were talking with Bennett Williams, and they are talking about going up on Capital Hill and about their testimony. Harold is supposed to go up and give the testimony. Williams says,

"Take the fifth." Harold says, "No there is nothing wrong in my life. I never took a nickel. I never let my members down. I'm talking." I can remember Bennett Williams saying, "Please save your speeches for Labor Day." Anyway, Harold went up and wouldn't take the fifth, and they didn't get anything on him. So, the answer to your question is there were people who were not bad.

*Q: So in the eastern conference from Maine to...*

BYRNE: No, Eastern Canada, Montreal right down. When it got in the real far south now, I forget where the line was, Georgia or something, you see you had all those members and tremendous trucking. You had United Parcel. We were a big time operation. I put out a newspaper, a labor newspaper. I mean economics. It dealt with labor legislation and that type of thing. So \_\_\_\_\_ talks. He told me he had the money and anything Tom could do to show up the headquarters because they were all fighting one another. Tom went on then and became secretary treasurer when English died. English was also incorrupt. He was a guy out of Boston. So there were guys. Then you had the guy in Cleveland. I forget his name.

*Q: Jackie Presser.*

BYRNE: Presser. Nobody knew at the time. He was working for the FBI. He was giving them all this information for years. He was a crook. He was such a good source. He was pinning stuff on these guys for years. Anyway, those were the type and it was great experience. We also ran education. We also used to have all these not just the usual education, but you had the conferences where you could bring people together. Let's say I use Safeway because you had all the retail people and truckers together. I have two Jimmy Hoffa stories.

*Q: He came out of the Midwest didn't he, St. Louis?*

BYRNE: He came out of Detroit. I'll give you three stories because this is very important. Jimmy was a tough guy and a great union leader, but he started to try to organize up there, Kroger and those people. They beat him up unmercifully he and his people. So this is how Jimmy got into trouble. Dorfman, out of Chicago, said I can give you muscle. Dorfman made it sound like he was a great trade unionist, help run pension funds and the like. Well, Jimmy made the mistake of letting Dorfman help him. Dorfman was a crook. Dorfman was using pension money. That is how he was. He wasn't the usual teamster; he was in pensions. Not on the payroll; he ran these pension funds, Red Dorfman. Once they got in, that was the foot in the door, so that is how the Mafia and some of their people got in. That is not the whole answer because Johnny Diehl was working out of New York and I don't think he needed Red Dorfman. This is early days, I am talking about the early 30's. Jimmy got beaten up time after time. It was really bad. I am not talking about pushing people around; I am talking about bringing the goons in. So that was the story there.

I always believed Jimmy was innocent although today I think Jimmy did get his hands

dirty, but he wasn't interested in money. That never bothered him. His wife was a very devout Catholic who went to mass every day. A Polish lady, it was one of those kinds of things, you know, Jimmy was never around. Jimmy never fooled around. Time Magazine had put out an article on Jimmy once and they said he doesn't smoke, he doesn't drink, he doesn't go with girls and then they had four pictures and they said but he goes with guys who do. Each one was a guy who did one or the other. That was right on Jimmy, he didn't. He didn't care about clothes you know. He wore the white sweat sox and the black pants. I began getting a little bit worried; I didn't like what was going on. Not with what Jimmy was doing. I always thought he was an outfit kind of guy and the trucking contract was marvelous and all that type of thing. I knew there were guys like Johnny Diehl and Tony Pro and Kohn. I didn't have anything to do with Johnny Diehl but I did with Kohn, I did with Pro, because they were active in things that I was active in. So I got worried. Now I began to say should I or shouldn't I be with the teamsters.

I had one other thing I should tell about Jimmy. Jimmy, to show what a leader he was, Jimmy and I one night were going down to West Virginia to give a speech in Charleston. He was going to give a speech and he had a couple of his boys along on the plane. If you know Charleston, the airport is on top of a mountain. We got a bad storm and the guy said, "Mr. Hoffa, we can't land." Jimmy said, "I told these guys I was coming down for them. What is it going to cost you to land?" The guy says, "Five hundred bucks Jimmy." So he reels out and gives him \$500 and we land. I wasn't too happy of course. But I didn't have a choice. But that is the type of guy he was. He said I am going to show up for these guys, and I am showing up for them. Then I went up to him and this is the story if you haven't heard it, there are a lot of people in town, this is one of the reasons why I became very close to George Meany. I went into him and said, "You have got to get rid of Tony Pro; you have got to get rid of Kohn in Philadelphia, and you have got to get rid of a third guy who was much lesser and the name wouldn't mean anything to you, or I quit. Well, the guy didn't miss a beat. He sat in the chair and said, "So long, Pal."

I have another Jimmy story to tell. It was the night just before Jimmy was nominated to run. I guess this was after Beck. We were in Florida and the teamsters conventions were always something. Tom Flynn brought me into it. There was another guy too, Bill Kirtlan who later became a major labor lawyer for the employers. A great guy who worked for Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. He brought the two of us in. When they nominated him everybody stands up, but I didn't stand up. Jimmy noticed it. I said, this guy isn't getting rid of these guys. So he came to me after and said, well I weaseled off a little on this. He said, "Why didn't you stand up?" I said, "Well I am a staff guy and I didn't think I should get myself involved, and secondly, I have to tell you, I wouldn't have stood up anyway." He kind of liked that. He could have gotten rid of me but that was Jimmy's style.

The other story I started to tell was in Atlantic City. This time I almost got my guy in big trouble. Tom Flynn, we were having our convention and Jimmy was coming down. That was the eastern conference, and Jimmy was going to give the talk. Jimmy was coming in late at night. He wasn't going to waste any time. So I went to the guy behind the desk at the hotel and asked, "What will it cost you to say you don't have a reservation for Hoffa? Will \$20 do it?" Jimmy comes in and there is no reservation. You can imagine. So he had

to go elsewhere. But it was dumb because my guy was drinking. So Jimmy is trying to find Flynn. We are carrying Tom from room to room because we can't have him found drunk. That was a sophomoric thing to do, but I got a lot of laughs out of it. So did other people later. It wasn't smart; that was one of the dumber things in my life. He never found out who did it. He thought it was Tom Flynn. Anyway, so that is how I left. I went down and told Tom Flynn what I did. He said, "You told that to Jimmy? Of course he told you you are fired." So he picks the phone up and calls the control and says, "Give this guy a thousand dollar raise. He is on the payroll until he finds a job." I was lucky.

*Q: He respected what you did.*

BYRNE: He thought it was great that I did it, but he couldn't believe it. I had my application in at the State Department for a long time. Jim Taylor was involved.

*Q: He was in the Labor Department.*

BYRNE: That's right. Jim Taylor was in the Labor Department for years. Jim was also the type of guy who was gung ho on the labor attaché program.

*Q: He was recruiting actually at that time from the labor movement.*

BYRNE: That's right. I don't know how many months I was waiting. I was going to leave the teamsters eventually. I left the teamsters, I can't remember when, but obviously I was a couple of months ahead of time. Then in the fall of '59 my State job opened up and they wanted me to go to Ghana. That is where I dealt with Alec Peterson. I went off to Ghana and I was there at the time of independence. It had just happened. No, I think I got there just before. That was a booming country in the sense that they had an educated group. They had found gold there. They also had cocoa, and Kwame Nkrumah was their leader.

*Q: This would have been the old Gold Coast.*

BYRNE: The old Gold Coast became Ghana, that's correct. There were a lot of eyes on Ghana then. They still didn't know what to do with a labor attaché at the embassy though. They still had this antagonism. I found it very frequently too. You were not a true State Department person and they shut the door. I know I came in as an FSR and took the test, and then was brought into the program.

*Q: You were an R-3 according to the book.*

BYRNE: Yes that was when I came in, I came in as an R-3. At that time I took quite a cut in salary to do that because you were well taken care of with the teamsters, believe me. But I wanted to get in, and it didn't take too long. I eventually got up to a grade one when I was in Britain. I guess I jumped, it was two and then one. I can't remember exactly when the two happened, but I do remember very clearly my oral interview. Fortunately I had read a book. If I do a little cramming, I can remember oddball things. I had one person who asked me some of the silliest things that you would never need to know.

Some treaty that happened in Cuba that was some minor thing, and fortunately I had done my research.

*Q: Well, as a research director you probably learned the skills that were necessary.*

BYRNE: I think you are probably correct on that. In Ghana, unfortunately for the West, John Tennega was the head of the TUC (Trade Union Congress). He was a little bit venal and also was into the hands of the Soviets and even the Chinese. It was rather pathetic. There was one guy, Magnus George, one of their staff people. He wore five watches. It showed the corruption that was going on. The Chinese would give him one, and the Russians would give him one, and some other country would give him one. He wore them all. We had an international man, Seth Dawson.

*Q: He was on the staff?*

BYRNE: He was the international guy for the TUC. They had an international guy, but he was a western frame. He was religious and had a religious background and whatnot, and he was our friend. He had to be careful because Tennega was playing a big role in the government. I am not sure if he didn't have some type of a cabinet position. He had the equivalent of it. So he was someone you had to take account of. Well we got into things. Dawson, for example, I would ask him a question. He knew I could read upside down.

*Q: Oh really, what an asset.*

BYRNE: Well I learned to do that, and so he knew I could do that. He would have the papers on his desk, letters and whatnot, and I could read what was on them, to Tennega from some of the communist countries or whatnot. One time he wanted to make sure I saw something, so he told me he didn't have time, but if I went in, I could stay there. I looked at the book and it was what they were going to do to try to disrupt the ILO conference in Nigeria. I can't remember the year but it was at that time. I was down there with Lodge. I went down as one of the delegates. He gave me, the CIA was mad that I didn't get the original letter; I had a copy. They sent the copy to everybody because it showed what the Russians or Soviets were doing, and what TUC was doing through Africa. I don't remember the details now, but it showed how they were going to try to disrupt the conference and what they were doing against the West. The only thing was they weren't satisfied. Couldn't you go back and take the original copy. I said, "Yeah, that is real smart." I took the thing and made a copy of it right in their place. Poor Seth Dawson would get into trouble. But I mean there was that type of relationship. We had the guy on the top, very pro East including the Chinese and some of the staff. And then some of the local unions, the old railway unions, miners, they were the type who were sympathetic to the west. They used to play a big role. Also the government would get involved. You know, they had a big railroad strike, and they were trying to use me as a mediator to solve this. It finally didn't work as well for the union as they hoped. I wasn't all that successful. My conditions weren't met. They had me in there working behind the scenes, but it came out. At least the railway union didn't lose out as far as men getting laid off or whatnot, but they didn't get as much as they had hoped to get. Of course, they

also wanted the sky. I spoke frequently at a university on American social matters and whatnot. Nkrumah came by once. He had gone to Lincoln University in the States, so he knew the States. He said, "Would you mind telling these people that Americans aren't afraid to dirty their hands, and they don't have to go walking around with white coats all the time in the factories. Everybody thinks they are supposed to have a white coat, and they are not supposed to get their hands dirty. Would you tell them that is the success of the United States, that American workers and whatnot and some of their management people are not afraid to get their hands dirty." So here he was. So I said, "Yeah, that is very true." He called himself Il Soggifo. Some of them used to call him Soggyfoot." Soggifo meant some big name in Swahili or whatever. That is the type of thing you did there. It wasn't like in Britain where you could play a much bigger role.

Oh, I forgot one important thing, I mean as far as my career went. I ended up in the White House with Kennedy.

*Q: At that time?*

BYRNE: Yeah, I came back. I had written, I made a mistake and wrote it as an airgram. Do you remember airgrams?

*Q: Oh yes. They were 35 pages long.*

BYRNE: Nobody read them. Anyway I wrote one. The Volta dam we were helping to finance and some American industry was in, and I said that I thought a mistake was made. I thought it could have been a multi nation deal because it was on the border and I think they made a mistake. Anyway, somebody had sent it over to the White House.

*Q: Your airgram.*

BYRNE: My airgram. I didn't think anybody ever read them to be honest. But you were on the record and if people needed some background. I can't remember too much about it. Remember Ralph Dungan?

*Q: I do remember the name.*

BYRNE: Well Ralph was in the White House. He had been on Kennedy's staff, and he ran a lot of this type of thing, you know saying who should be appointed ambassadors and who should be appointed this, named directors in key places and whatnot. So Ralph got the airgram, and Ralph called me to the White House. Now this had to be when I was on home leave from Ghana. He discussed it, and he took me into the President, but frankly just to shake hands. The President was on his way out. He had been told about it. They said we think something should happen with you, so we want you to become AID director in Chile. We are going to concentrate on Chile. Doris Kearns' husband, Richard Goodwin, was handling Latin America. I went over to lunch at the White House after that. I said, I won't take the job unless you give me three months Spanish training. Goodwin wasn't buying any delay. No delay, you either take it now or... I said, "Well, I

am not going to take it." Incidentally, I was supposed to go to Geneva as a labor attaché. That is where I had been assigned, and I was about to go there. We bought winter clothes and the whole shooting match, I mean for the family. So then they said, OK, but we are not going to let you go. They called me again, Ralph Dungan. You remember John Emmerson, one of the China hands. Senator Owen Brewster was one of the guys in the Senate who held up any Presidential appointments for the China people. He always had it against the China hands. He said they had given the whole thing to the communists. Anybody who had been there was never going to get anything. Emmerson was sitting in the basement because he wouldn't give up. He wanted the ambassadorship to Tanzania, and he was going to wait them out. They said, look, we hope that something happens, but we don't think anything is going to happen. We don't want to tell Emmerson, so instead of taking an ambassadorship to Africa, a small country there, would you go to Tanzania as chargé, and stay there until something happens with Emmerson or Brewster. Finally Brewster gave up and went out to the Hoover Institute at Stanford, a bitter man. That is how I went out there as chargé.

*Q: You went out to Dar es Salaam then?*

BYRNE: To Tanzania, that is how I went out. Here we are with all our winter clothes paid all of that out of pocket, and I had a large family, four or five children. The fifth one was born in Ghana. My wife went to the military hospital. The doctor was an African doctor who was probably capable; he worked for the military. There was some kind of strike and he was living in his home, and nobody could get him to the hospital. Fortunately, some midwives are not bad, but they also had an African lady who was not as skilled. My wife could hear her saying to the nurse, "Darling, don't put that all on her." Anyway it was that type of thing.

So, as I said, that is how I ended up in Tanzania. Eventually they sent an ambassador, Bill Leonhart. That is when Crockett wrote me and said I understand you are interested, you want to go to London. Phil Delaney at that time I guess was pushing me for London, maybe Meany, I don't know who else.

*Q: This was when you were going to go...*

BYRNE: No, I was out there in Dar es Salaam. It was definitely into '63 when Leonhart came. A lot of people weren't enthused about Leonhart. He was a very able guy. I shouldn't be speaking about one of my colleagues, but he had a little complex. He was unhappy they sent him to Dar because he thought he should have been given a much bigger post. Then when he went to Yugoslavia, it was a good post, but he got into such trouble that they had to pull him. We got along well enough, but it took a lot of being a nice DCM to get along with Bill. He was an able guy but...

*Q: Being DCM is the hardest job in the foreign service.*

BYRNE: It is. I think so. The only time he got mad at me, he wanted to fire somebody on the staff who had forgot to lower the flag for JFK. There was a woman who was not very

good. He wanted her fired, he wanted me to have her fired because of that. I said, "I will fire her for a substantive reason, but I will not fire her because somebody didn't pull the flag down on the death." Bill wasn't there when that happened. He might have been away at a meeting or something because I handled the details. Maybe he was called back. I wouldn't do it and that got him quite upset. I told him, "If you are going to do it for that reason, you are sending the cable back. I don't consider that coming under a DCM's job to fire somebody for that reason."

*Q: Was this an American employee?*

BYRNE: Yeah. He didn't want her. She wasn't that good, I'll be honest about it. But if he wanted to do it on substantive reasons, that is a different story. Then I would have carried out his orders, but to do it just because somebody didn't pull a flag down who was duty officer. It was trivial. I wouldn't do it. If you want it, you do it. I'm not doing it. That didn't make him happy. That was my only run in with him.

*Q: Did you have any substantive labor issues while you were in Dar es Salaam?*

BYRNE: Not really. They just weren't that far ahead. We knew the labor people. I'll tell you the big thing was the ones who were coming into power. It was still under British rule and these guys were going back to try to take over places like South Africa and Zimbabwe. All the potential politicians. They were in Dar by the dozens.

*Q: Oh, I see, the exiles from different place.*

BYRNE: Exiles, and they had a title, but they were the exiles. People like Robert Mugabe, any of them from the South African side considered themselves superior to the others. These were the people who were there, and this was the main thrill of a job.

*Q: So it was a regional center for the exiles.*

BYRNE: A lot of them because you could go from Tanzania into a lot of the countries, and also they were welcome there. There is another time where I had a problem because Leonhart didn't believe we should be playing ball with them. One night I had a dinner when Bert Matthews was visiting. He was an ambassador to Nigeria, and he became head of the senior seminar. Bert was an old timer. He must have been head of Africa region, he probably was or at least some of that area. I know because it seemed a big job when Soapy Williams was the assistant secretary, so it had to be the regional. Bert came out there. I had a dinner for all these guys. I used to have them to my house a lot, and I invited Bert. They dined for about five hours. Do we come; don't we come. I personally don't give a damn whether you come or not, but you are doing yourself a big favor. You are going back, and you can say you know these guys. So far you have avoided them. Here you are going to sit down and have dinner with them. These guys are going to be on the front pages in a couple of years or maybe next year. It won't hurt you to go back and say, Yeah, I know them. They both show up, but they were so uneasy.

*Q: Is that when Julius Nyerere was head of the government?*

BYRNE: Julius Nyerere, that's right, and he was great.

*Q: I was going to say, he came as close as any to being a charismatic.*

BYRNE: He was, and he was an honest guy. I'll tell you a story. We got out there just before Christmas. I ran into Julius Nyerere and said, "Gee, where would I buy a Christmas crib?" He had an SUV. He said, "Hop in my thing; I'll take you." So he took me and we bought the Christmas crib. I mean here is the head of the government. The important part was, we always had trouble with him because it seemed, his type of socialism was a benign type of socialism. Secondly, therefore, some of the socialist countries including eastern Europe and the Chinese, he didn't snub. He called me one day when I was sent in to give him some kind of a talk on this and to say, we are not happy. He says, "Look, I am going to tell you something. I know you understand because you are a Catholic. You know, I was a convert. I was the first guy from this country to read graduate studies, and I became a convert when I was a young man. I had to make my decision what was western Christianity and what was communism. If your people can't understand a man who can make that choice. I have got to play with these people because I have got to build my country, and what I can get out of them is fine. But if you are worried, understand that I can't do any more for them." To me he was an honest man. That was the truth. A lot of people didn't buy that back home.

*Q: Was he still a practicing Catholic?*

BYRNE: Oh yeah. Yes he was, but it was his version of practicing. I don't think he followed every rule, I really don't know. But I know that he talked religion, went to church. They had a black Cardinal there, a Tanzanian Cardinal. The Cardinal had no problem with Julius, so obviously he practiced it enough. He wasn't an old man when he became head of state. He had to be in his twenties when he was studying in Britain. Tanzania was such a poor country. Except for things such as the railroads which you had down in the union. They had a strong union in there, some mines but they didn't have very many mines, so the union movement was pretty weak. It was good. It was a start for democracy and that type of a thing, so I am not knocking it.

*Q: Well the conventional wisdom, correct me if I am wrong, was that when these countries became independent, you had three sources of power. You had the government and the civil service, the army and the trade unions. For the most part the government moved to direct or at least control the trade unions.*

BYRNE: This happened here because Nkrumah not only wanted to become head of Ghana but he literally wanted to be the George Washington. Tennega had a certain amount of power but it was at the sufferance of Nkrumah until Nkrumah started to go downhill. Nkrumah, I often thought, at the end was not entirely sane. He got carried away.

*Q: Would you like to give a comparison between Nkrumah and Nyerere?*

BYRNE: Nkrumah sincerely saw himself as the George Washington or the George Washington to be of Africa. That became a goal for him more than worrying about Ghana proper as the early years went by. Also, remember he had married an Egyptian. His wife was an Egyptian, so that in itself extended to him that he could be north and south Africa. As a result of this, much of his actions were to the detriment of Ghana. I am sure that if you look closely into the Ghanaian record, you will see where this was possible that he had done this. I do remember that he had gone so far about worrying about being the George Washington of Africa and pushing himself at that level that his country had suffered, and some of his ministers including the more powerful ones like treasury attempted to move him a bit away from the edge of power. This influenced his actions to the detriment of Ghana. Now Nyerere did have a concept of African socialism. He attempted to inculcate that as a philosophy for his country which had been a very poor country and probably still is. It faltered under the British who tried to push an agricultural scheme and it didn't work. They had terrible farming problems except in the northern part up around Arusha and the lake district. Nyerere did attempt, not by use of physical force, but through force of personality and other measures, to further African socialism as a philosophy of the country which actually tended to set them back. He also would have liked to have seen this spread throughout Africa. Not with him necessarily making himself the father of Africa; father of the philosophy, yes. He would have liked to see something different from what he saw as communism, something he saw different than capitalism. He would have liked to see what he considered apt for Africa and its people, its tribal setup, its community type life, its extended family life, this Africa socialism would have worked, but unfortunately he was wrong on that one. Africa is still searching for what is proper for it, and some countries have gone their own way. Uganda is probably a perfect example of someone who is trying to move faster, still looking for a third way, but one more tied or certainly willing to accept the things of capitalism. That would be my assumption.

One story I should tell about the difference between Ghana and Tanzania. The Ghanaian parliament, like the British parliament, is uproarious, the give and take. There were some of the funniest scenes going in. In contrast, the Tanzanian parliament was very sedate, staid, very serious. I once said to Nyerere, "You know, you should be congratulated on the very businesslike way you run this parliament. Compared to Ghanaians, it is night and day." He said, "I wish we had the Ghanaian way of doing things. I'll tell you one thing. We never started to celebrate independence, and they never stopped."

*Q: Just a follow up question, how did they in the Pan-Africanism, how did they resolve the ethnic differences that have been so difficult in many of the African countries?*

BYRNE: Are you talking about both of them?

*Q: Either one.*

BYRNE: I think that Nkrumah kind of passed. I think that it became too much for him. I

really think he lost his balance. I think he was attempting to do it under force of his great personality. That he had built himself up and that he had led the way, that he had been so successful. Actually he was dreaming because there were problems in Ghana. They had an educated base to start from where Nyerere didn't. Now Nyerere was one who thought that by dint of the soundness of the philosophy of what he was doing, that would convince people, and that is the difference. He would be a thinker and egotism wasn't the main part of it. I am not going to say a minor, I am not going to say he was entirely absent.

For Nkrumah it was major with him. He saw himself as being, as he said, the George Washington of Africa. That is not a word I coined; I heard him say it. So to me that is the difference between the two: an over simplification, understanding that Tanzania was a very poor, uneducated country compared to Ghana, and even compared to what was going on in Kenya and Uganda who had good climates and crops and coffee and whatnot. Poor Africa is still finding its way.

One night I had dinner with a number of the Tanzanian ministers including several Indians. One was Speaker of the House, and the other was a minister under Nyerere.

*Q: These were ethnic Indians who...*

BYRNE: Were active in the government. Now later on, things changed and they had to leave. They left the country. That is another story after my time. They played a role at that time. That was part of the Nyerere mystique that he tried to bring this together. They also had a very able Minister of the Treasury who was a pastor here in the United States. He knew how to work with the World Bank because he was very intelligent, came out of the northern part of the Lake area. That is why Nyerere kept him there. They were just not a well-to-do country at all, and it was very difficult just to get education going.

*Q: Are there any final observations about Africa you'd like to make before we turn to your next assignment?*

BYRNE: I think we, and that's not just the United States, it's the West, expected them to move too fast. Secondly, the Africans wanted to do away with agriculture and get into the industrial age and then really into the computer age. Some of them had the background. It was a mistake to let them think that agriculture still wasn't important. That led to some very serious droughts. The weather played a part too, but the fact is they were unprepared to handle it. That picture up on the wall is one of the places where we had one of our food lifts. I would abolish all debt to them now. Give them a chance. Some of these countries have such debts that it is more than their gross national product, and there is no hope of ever getting out of it unless we do something. Now I don't believe you just say business as usual. On the other hand, I think we should be careful of trying to foist our way on them entirely. Something seriously should be done. More than is being done now. I know that President Clinton is moving in that direction, but I think it is so serious that is another thing I'd do. I think the third thing which is going to be important. I think the Internet, this age can be very important for them because it is going to give them a lot

more information and communications and allow them to join closer together in ways they never could have afforded. I wouldn't want to put a time period on it, but they will be the beneficiaries including education. They could be getting education on the net. In the long run, I am not pessimistic on Africa, but I have no reason to be joyful about the sufferings that have gone on and will continue. I also ran an international NGO which had some places in Africa.

*Q: What was the NGO?*

BYRNE: It was private agencies collaborating together, a membership NGO. In the United States, we had people like Save the Children, CARE, Project Concern. We had members in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We helped them finance or lead them into projects around the world. I had been back to Africa several times as a result of working with them between '85 and '90.

*Q: Let me just try one other idea. You were in Africa at the time when the U.S. government was probably more engaged in African policy than I can think of any time since. What extent do you think we should be involved?*

BYRNE: Well, since Africa isn't sexy and has had so many problems, we always have each administration saying we are going to get back into it, and they don't do it. In the early days we had people like Soapy Williams who was willing to become an assistant secretary. He had enough people who knew him and knew what he was saying and he had enough clout that he was not afraid to push his way around. Not that many of his ideas were not that sound, but you had him willing to take those jobs. I even thought that Averell Harriman was willing to give some push to Africa. I think a lot of people, the World Bank and those, got soured because things went so bad. But as I said earlier, I think we took the wrong approach and expected things to move too fast. Yes, I think we owe it as a nation to help get more involved. I am saddened by the amount of strife they have had there, really saddened because it is serious. I think we were terrible, not just we, when I say we I am talking the West and you can include the East or anybody else. We let Rwanda get totally out of control. I don't say I had an answer for it because it is very ethnic oriented. That shows the difference that we would let that many people be killed and do so very little for it. Now, as I say, I don't know who could have stopped Angola, but it has been going on for years. It is just one thing after another. The Congo is a disgrace. One of my first jobs as a labor attaché, I was over there when the Congo blew up. I was sent out to the airport to take the BOAC planes that would land and put the refugees or whoever were fleeing from the country, decide who got on the plane because they were bringing them into Accra, not just BOAC, who got on the plane to London.

*Q: It was like a refugee officer.*

BYRNE: That's right.

*Q: This would have been late 1961?*

BYRNE: We were very heavily involved. The point of the story was you never know as a labor attaché what you are going to get put in to doing. It is a great thrill but also a heavy responsibility and therefore adds to the worthiness of the job. Even when I went and turned down an ambassadorship they were talking for me in Africa, I always thought that was one of my most interesting roles. So I was assigned as Labor Attaché to London.

*Q: This was immediately after you finished up in Dar es Salaam. You were in London 1964-69?*

BYRNE: Yes. I thought that the real challenge was with a Labor government in Britain and the power of the trade union movement. When I say the power of the trade union movement, their vote controlled the Labor Party. So if you had influence on the trade union movement, therefore you automatically influenced the government. Also therefore you got to know on a much higher level people in the government as well as the trade union movement. When I came there my first introduction was a miners' gala. It was a big political event. The miners had a big march in Durham which is a big mining center. Unfortunately I can't remember the head there, but he was a very important man in the Labor Party and well thought of. Harold Wilson invited me and two of my daughters to come and sit in his suite with his family for the gala. As a relative newcomer to Britain, was a big pat on my back. Everybody saw me up there, thousands of people. I didn't quite figure that this would happen. My most sincere embarrassment as a diplomat happened that morning, and my daughters have never forgotten to remind me of it. Wilson's father was there, and when his father got up to leave, he couldn't find his hat. I had been sitting on it for two hours, and it was flat. Anyway, I can't quite remember what I said. I think Mrs. Wilson enjoyed it more than anybody else. Also, a number of the shadow ministers were there because the election hadn't quite come. James Callahan had been a great tie. He had been a labor TUC man, and, George Brown too. So, these fellows didn't forget where they came from. I was automatically in with what was to be the foreign minister and secretary of the treasury when the cabinet was formed. Again this required a certain amount of tact so that you weren't overstepping your bounds.

*Q: Has the election actually taken place?*

BYRNE: No, but it was so certain.

*Q: It was already on track.*

BYRNE: Yeah, it was so certain this was going to happen. As the American labor attaché you were always an honored guest at the Labor Party. I had gotten to know the minister of co-ops. He told us here take my suite and have some beer and go and stay as late as you want. The point is, this is the type of thing you could do with the trade union and with Labor.

The job which they were more concerned about me doing over there was about the Vietnam War. Fortunately, for myself, I went with the Domino Theory so I can support out position because, otherwise, I think if you were one of those ones who couldn't

support it, the involvement I had would have been too difficult. The type person I am I would have just said I am not doing it. But, I did believe we were doing the right thing, understanding in years to come how debatable it has become. At the time I felt fine doing what I was doing.

*Q: It is always easier with 20-20 hindsight.*

BYRNE: You got it. The TUC controlled the vote of the Labor Party. They were the party in control of the policy of the government. Now, I am not saying Wilson understood the Vietnam circumstances, he couldn't have done, but in something that important, he would not, without getting into this being allied with the United States. If he had gone the other way, the TUC, probably he would have to have given in. He couldn't control that part. So, as I said, you had the control, you had the votes, and while you had a leftist group, they weren't sufficient in numbers or power. Even in the engineers which had a large number of leftists, it was run by using the right wing using that left-right circle of British trade unionism. Lord Biltcarin. Even though you had some trouble with the transport workers, they weren't sufficient to turn it back. Frank Cousins, who was head of the transport, and later Jack Jones played a bit to the left, they were always very strong supporters if it became something I needed. They always made sure that I was an honored guest at anything they did. In fact, Frank once helped me immeasurably. You remember Joe Goetz?

*Q: Oh yes.*

BYRNE: Frank was coming to the United States, and he wanted to go and include the dock workers on the West coast, Harry Bridges. This was going to cause a problem, so I got the brainstorm. All right, I'll handle everything, your whole trip, but I am not handling that. You have got a consular officer on the West Coast to help you if you want to go. He thought that was brilliant. That was a perfect solution. So he had a great trip with all the other unions, but he did make that trip out there. I came back and Joe Goetz said, "You are in big trouble." I said, "What?" He said, "Well... And it is very possible that Jay Lovestone may have been very excited I don't know. So he said, "You are in big trouble."

*Q: You were back in Washington?*

BYRNE: I was back in Washington. I picked up the phone and called Virginia T. Haas and said, "I'd like to see Mr. Meany." Come on over, so they set something up and I went over. I said, "I understand I am in big trouble." "No," he said. "I thought you did a brilliant job. You didn't get us involved at all and yet you kept him in line. You know, Joe overreacted." I am sure that Lovestone must have said what is the matter with that dumb guy or something doing something like that. I never got the U.S. in any shape or form involved in it. Frank did it on his own. Then Frank wrote a very flowery letter back from the secretary telling what a great guy I was. So, that didn't hurt me. So did Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor. Willard Wirtz went overboard. He even pushed a little too far saying I was the greatest lecturer he had ever heard. We were at the airport, and his plane

was hung up, and we were back in the hangars. We had about an hour and a half or two hours just yakking with each other, drinking coffee, so he said I was the most brilliant lecturer he ever heard on wage policy for the British were into that. He was trying to be a nice guy, but the fact is that didn't hurt me sending it back to the secretary to put in my file. That was two things that happened being close to the government. It naturally followed that the labor ministry and particularly the British type labor ministry, they always wanted to be very close to the labor attaché both for the mutual things the labor department did, policies we had, and then there was the wage policy deal they were experimenting with and labor legislation.

Barbara Ward was a great person. She was in Ghana when I was out there. Barbara Ward was an intellectual, and she was very good. Her husband was in some way tied in with one of the international outfits. That is what she was doing out there. Compared to her, he was of no account. But, when she got in there, she was careful what she did in politics, because she knew that there were the Browns and the Callahans she had to contend with, and they were very pro West. Most of them were pro West. But I never had any problem, and they were guests at our house. I mean they would always show up if you had a dinner, particularly Ray Gunther. I used to have him a lot, and the trade union leaders, you would get George Woodcock and whoever, and you would always get a politician or two and a newspaper person, so we had marvelous dinners. You always had first rate people showing. The other thing I found was that Meany would come every year. He always stopped off in Britain to keep tabs.

*Q: ILO and ICFTU?*

BYRNE: Yeah whatever. The ILO or ICFTU. I'm sure the record would show that he was there every year I was there. So you would always pick him up off the boat and dock in Southampton. You would drive down and drive him back along with Virginia T. Haas. You would set up a schedule for him. The thing I liked about him, whether it was George Woodcock or what, boy he always took me into it. No matter who it was, I was there. That was good for you because particularly with the union guys they'd say well this guy, he must be all right. With the politics, politicians, why they were impressed too because they knew Meany counted for something. David Bruce was the greatest ambassador I ever served under, he was outstanding. Bruce was always very careful with how he handled Meany. He didn't want to do something only for Meany, but he would always invite him. His wife was a great entertainer. When you got invited to a lunch or a dinner there, my wife was sitting next to a movie person. A couple of movie actors would be there and a couple of politicians. It was just a high class type of thing. That is what he would bring me into. Meany liked this. It showed that Bruce was a man who was confident in himself, who could treat him on a level that he knew would be being treated both ways rather than saying I would expect something special. He took it the other way. He also gave me credit which I didn't deserve. That is how Bruce wanted to do it. I did ask Bruce, I want you to do something for me. I don't want him coming in and out of here. I didn't quite put it that strong. With Bruce, you had to do a little bit more finesse, I'll tell you that. And that's what he always would say, I'll come up with something, don't worry, and then you'd get the invitation there. He was always kind enough to invite my

wife along too. Even when Meany went on the radio for interviews he took me, chewing a damn cigar.

*Q: This was Meany chewing a cigar?*

BYRNE: Chewing a cigar on the big interview on television or radio you know. Reuther always came through too. Reuther wasn't for inviting me to all his meetings, but he came through enough with me, you know, that we had lunch or something together. I probably picked him up. I did pick him up at the airport unless somebody didn't want me to pick him up, you know, who had made other arrangements. He always made sure I was at his press conference.

*Q: Was Victor Reuther floating around?*

BYRNE: Victor wasn't floating around too much when that was going on. In fact, I remember at the press conference Victor wasn't there period. I don't remember seeing very much of Victor frankly, so I had a feeling that Victor wasn't around for that. Now the famous time I had him, the '65 ICFTU conference when Meany was going to say you guys gotta really start to account for money. I am fed up with what is going on here and threatening to pull out. He was really gonna lay it on them, and Reuther was playing it the other way. I knew this ahead of time, so I pick them up and I said separately, I said, "Look, there is no press conference for you guys here." That killed it. I knew I could get in big trouble, but I said, "I don't want you guys making trouble fighting something out in front of me." Not me personally, but the fact that I have got to live with this thing, and it is not going to carry any weight for you doing it. It is not going to carry the ball. "George, I am going to go to dinner with you, and I'll go to lunch with Walter." I told both of them this when they got off. I was waiting for them to say, who died and left you boss? They both said, Oh, brilliant. That got me out of it and everything went fine. When he hit Amsterdam, Meany gave his press conference. That is when he went after them for wasting the money in the solidarity fund.

*Q: This was in Amsterdam?*

BYRNE: Yeah, this was at the annual ICFTU meeting. I think Baker was the head, but I'm not sure. Then Major got up and he was sore. They were all against Meany. Meany said, "Look this money I found out is being spread around the world at interest and is being used for the pensions of the ICFTU people, not for organizing. We want our money back." Then this led eventually to them getting out and Walter staying in and playing ball with the teamsters for a couple of years there. Wage policy was a big issue. Vietnam was the key political issue. I always had a policy of doing a lot of speaking as long as they would pick up my fare and I'd go speak. I didn't want the embassy using USIA funds. I always tied in a factory visit, so it turned out great because I saw the country, I learned a lot, and it didn't cost anything. You are always more valuable if they are paying for it. We also covered Ireland.

*Q: Oh you did.*

BYRNE: At least to go to the conferences. I didn't do the day by day stuff, but I covered the trade union conferences.

*Q: This was the Republic of Ireland, not northern Ireland.*

BYRNE: Both. And it was the only place where the both of them got together. With trade unions they could hold a meeting and they were both together. Not many people knew that. I have a very humorous story on the deal. I got there and there were two TV networks, one the ITV and the other PBS or whatever. One of them got me on for half an hour at dinner time. They went through the whole business. At that time labor was having this big wage policy question and with Wilson it was a big thing. So we went on for this in the U.S. It went on for half an hour. We are at the dinner at which I was to speak, that is why I was up there. The consul general is there with me. The other network came at the dinner and said you went on for them, you have got to go on for us tonight. I really hadn't counted on that. The consul general said, "Yeah you have got to go." I said, "Well look, it is the same format." OK, absolutely. So I go on and what do they have? They flash on Jimmy Hoffa in a wild scene and they knew I was a former teamster. They started to ask me about Jimmy. These guys really screwed me, so I said, "Ah you have got it wrong." I made Jimmy holier than St. Patrick. Everything they said: oh no you don't have that right. The guy who was interviewing me didn't know what to do because his whole lead of questions was there. So, he got all befuddled and he was all over the lot. The next day I am walking down the main street in Belfast. Everybody is coming up and shaking my hand because they knew I had outsmarted this guy. I used to go there for those meetings, and Joe Keenan always had somebody. The only thing I didn't like about it, they always had, I can't drink in the morning. I am a great drinker other times, but I can't drink in the morning. I just don't like it. They always had this cognac. They would bring Joe in or whoever the delegate was from the U.S. and we'd have to have a drink. That was the excuse, and these guys would want to have another one. That was really tough for me. I really served my country.

*Q: You say wage policy, was this wage and price controls?*

BYRNE: Correct. They had some kind of system worked out. I wish I could remember more because Willard Wertz said I was a genius explaining it to him. It didn't work all that great. There was all the stuff that Lane Kirkland got involved in, I'm thinking the contract, social contract, all that kind of nonsense. He knew damn well it didn't work over there, why the hell did he think it was going to work over here. He tried to put it in here, the social contract. It just didn't work. I figured he didn't have any sense in that. I shouldn't get into him because he was nothing like Meany with the labor attaches.

*Q: We did try something during the Nixon administration.*

BYRNE: That's right. But he tried something later that he was going to introduce. He was all for the social contract. I had to say I was never one, it never really works. It is a grand idea, but it never really works. Somewhere along the line, you start making exceptions,

and then the whole thing goes and it is all out of kilter. Anyway, I won't get into it now. I do have a well thought out view why I was against it but I can't remember exactly what they were promoting. I remember, later on Lane tried to promote this; it didn't fly.

Then another thing that Meany did. Meany went and asked David Bruce could I accompany him to Paris. Whatever he had out there, he wanted me to be his advisor. We had a labor attaché there. Bruce thought it was a great idea. I really didn't want to cut in on the other guy's turf but I had to do it. So, I went over with Meany. Sargent Shriver says, "I don't know why you can't get a labor attaché to me like this man." It got embarrassing. He also had a funny thing. He threw a big reception for Meany, and Shriver was out playing tennis and doesn't show up on time. Shriver's wife, Eunice, was there, but this did not go over with Meany. So finally he shows up. Like a dumb thing, he says, I was playing tennis. So Meany, as only Meany can, had to say something. So he talks about two brothers or something and one was a manly man and the other was a tennis player.

*Q: Ambassador Shriver got the point.*

BYRNE: I couldn't believe it. Anyway he brought me over with him as I say.

One other thing Ambassador Bruce did. We had an American from the south, textile fellow, who opened a plant, and he was very anti labor, wouldn't allow a union. You could imagine, this was against the British law, and you can imagine what the newspapers did with this. So I went in to Bruce. Bruce was a gentleman's gentleman, but this is not the type of thing he wanted on the front of the paper. He didn't want to get involved in. I said, "We are going to have to call him in and you are going to have to sit down and talk to him." He said, "Yeah, I agree with you." I call and this fellow came. At first I took care of him. I told him this wasn't kosher. In Britain you had better plan it that way or you are going to be in serious trouble. You already are and it could get real serious and we don't want you around. I said, "Do you want the ambassador to tell you this?" He said, "No, you already told me well enough." I called Bruce, Bruce knew he had to see him. So Bruce said, "What do I tell him?" I said, "It is all set. This is a social visit, and it would make him happy as a lark if you..." So that worked out that way.

*Q: Was Ambassador Bruce generally pro labor?*

BYRNE: No, he was not pro labor, but he appreciated that it was important, and with the Labour government in, it was very important. He knew that I was delivering the vote, so that was all. Bruce was the type of guy, you never served under him I don't believe.

*Q: I met him, I never served.*

BYRNE: Well I want to tell you one thing. He taught me something about managing. He said, "I don't expect you guys to be here with your lights on after... when you are through, you are through. There are no brownie points hanging around here because you are not going to impress me. You are only going to not impress me that you can't do your job."

But, if something is up and you are not there, and you should have been there, that is up to you. As a professional you should know that you should be there." Well that is right. At some of these embassies people were staying until nine o'clock at night. Of course, with out friend Averell Harriman's wife, Pamela, she used to keep the guys in Washington at their desks because she called at midnight when she came home. That was five hours later. That was still seven o'clock. I had no use for Pamela, but that is another story.

I am trying to see if I told you about, well even the Tories called you in. They were interested in developments on labor and labor legislation. They would have you to a dinner occasionally. So, even though it was a labor government, you were called in. In fact, some people in the embassy were always surprised to walk in and see me sitting at the table. They couldn't figure, because I have to say, not every guy or lady in the embassy valued labor. And the military there...

As with the Tories, we even had some relationships with the Soviets. The embassy and the agency and the top political officer, Bill Brubeck, wanted me to keep a personal relationship which had been started by the Soviet labor attaché, Berninkov. There was a plus out of it. You got some very nice dinners at the Savoy Plaza or whatever. Occasionally you had to buy one. Not an awful lot I would say came out of it, but it showed how the embassy was willing to use an officer as a conduit. We received certain of their views because we had Holy Loch nuclear subs there and the Soviets were interested in that and the embassy was curious to know what kind of questions they were asking. They were also curious to know how Berninkov played with the TUC and if he tried to influence them on Vietnam. I found out there was more and more impact with the Scottish TUC. Very left, the people. In fact I walked in, and there was a private meeting going on with Berninkov and the board of the Scottish TUC.

*Q: Did the AFL-CIO have any reservations about your dealing with someone designated as a Soviet labor attaché?*

BYRNE: I was never asked, but it was never their business. I found out Lovestone probably did know. I mean since he was with the agency, he had connections. It didn't surprise me but it wasn't something I would say I would go and did. They knew that I dealt with Berninkov, that I knew Berninkov. When Berninkov said that they would pay for an article or something or they knew that I had a family when I came back to report they said Uh-UH. I said when I came back to report that this had reached its point. They said we agree. Up to then, it went on for six months or a year. Then all of a sudden they tried to pull something, and when he did that, automatically...

*Q: That was the end of the relationship.*

BYRNE: That was the end, yeah. I mean at a cocktail party or if I saw him in the hall. For example he came up to the TUC right close to Holy Loch to the Scottish TUC conference. He claimed he had fishing rods. He didn't have fishing rods, he had camera equipment. That is the type of thing I would report back. I am quite confident that British

MI6 had him under cover. I don't know that as a fact because sometimes they slip, but then I am sure they got under cover. I knew the guy well enough I would say, that is the first time I ever saw a guy catch fish with a camera. It was that aspect they would use you for. They also had confidence that you knew how to handle yourself. They didn't feel they were putting you in a position where you could compromise yourself.

*Q: This was the embassy?*

BYRNE: The embassy proper, yeah. Because I wouldn't have moved one inch if I didn't have full backing, and not just the agency.

*Q: Also the front office*

BYRNE: The front office, because the agency will use you. They never used me, but for example, they wanted me to go back and take the sheet of paper, the letters proper. So that was fine.

I used to cover the Irish, and that was important. You got relationships with the individuals on both sides, personal friends. The information agency used to put on trade union seminars. I would participate in those which we did pay for. I said most of the time I wouldn't go unless they would pick up the tab. If USIA was having one and wanted me, OK, fine, I wouldn't hold on that. I used to go up. They were all trade union matters.

*Q: Was there anyone at the consulate in Belfast to act as your person?*

BYRNE: Not really. It would have been nothing otherwise. Somebody did, but it wasn't a case where they really would have known. They didn't have that large a staff anyway.

At the Irish events, they even did it at some of the British trade unions' dinners, the big dinner at the end of whatever the conference was. The Irish always did this. At the end of the meal, everybody always had to get up and sing a song. The Soviet attaché was sometimes invited to these conferences so he was there. Berninkov left after that, so they had some young guy who was related to somebody back in Russia. He was a lightweight. Anyway, he got up and sang some miserable Volga boat song. I can't sing a note. They always used to take pity on me. They would say, Oh Tom will get up and tell us a yarn. So I always had to get jokes to tell them, but there was a relationship there that didn't lead to an awful lot other than our presence being felt with the Irish trade union movement. Let's just say if you were on TV or you would give an interview. I didn't run the things; the USIA ran the conference. There was always somebody high up in our embassy who would like a trip to Ireland, so they could get somebody at a senior level to attend which I thought was good because it gave more weight to it than just a trade union conference. You would always have to tell them stories. I used to tell them how you got your contracts. This really doesn't have much to do with the price of eggs, but Klugman used to love it. He was economics minister. He used to tell his conference it. I used to tell them when we came up to get a vote on the trucking. I said you'd be in there you know. You always made sure there was a back door to get out. You'd be sitting there; you'd be

talking, and the chairs would start moving up, and the guy would move his chair up, and before you knew it, they were all up front of you. So you wanted to be sure you had a way out. He always used to love those teamster stories. So did the people love them. Anyway, how much good you did, how much bad? I think you did some good. They felt they weren't abandoned and on their own you know both ways. And they did get along together. It was an occasion to see an AFL-CIO delegate come, at least to the annual conference. I was trying to figure because I was over there enough times, but I can't figure what else I was doing. Now they must have called me over occasionally for something because I can remember being over not just to conferences.

*Q: Were you officially assigned to both?*

BYRNE: This bothers me because that I can't remember exactly. It was expected that I did it. Every time they did it was expected in both embassies that I would do it.

*Q: There were some regional labor attachés.*

BYRNE: Not then, different. I don't think so in Europe, were there?

*Q: I think the Netherlands and Belgium were together.*

BYRNE: Well that may have been. Was that later though. I think that came later.

Another thing we did. Oh golly what was the name of those famous conferences. Boy they were big time up at Oxford. Anyway, they had a lot of money, then you had the ministers coming like the minister of labor or deputy couple of ministers.

*Q: The ones organized by Ray Marshall.*

BYRNE: He probably got into that but it was done by money out of some kind of foundation in Britain. They brought people from all over big time. They brought corporation people over. Like a GE guy who ran their labor relations development, and it would be different ones. Some of them would be political definitely. Top level people came. It was done in a manor from out near Oxford. I liked it because it put me in touch with a lot of top labor people, both labor and management people, and you got a chance to bring them up to date. People like Ford always touched base with you when they came in because Ford was big there. I'm surprising how many of their vice presidents came in. You may have got a meal or you may have been stuck to pay for them, but you were stuck, you didn't do that on purpose. They always came and took you out because they were very interested in what was going on. Ford particularly is a perfect example. They never missed. In fact they even offered me a job, but I just wasn't interested. I love you dearly but no thanks.

*Q: Today is Tuesday, March 14, 2000. I am Don Kienzle and I have the pleasure of resuming the interview with Tom Byrne a former ambassador in the State Department. Shall we begin with some final remarks on your tour in London?*

BYRNE: I remember one evening which was a payback to the media people for not permitting them to interview Meany and Reuther when they had made their trip before the ICFTU conference in Amsterdam in I believe it was 1965, mainly because there were to be sharp differences at that conference, very sharp differences. It seemed to me to be much better to let them have their discussions in Amsterdam rather than to air their differences in London and maybe further interfere with the conference. As a result, the next year when Meany came over, I told the media they would have a chance to be paid back, so I had them all out to the house, dinner with Meany. After the dinner, he sat in a big father's chair over there, and for three hours, he answered their questions. It was a very lively and fascinating evening. It was right in the midst of the Vietnam war, so that was an issue, but he handled all the questions on European labor and world labor as far as the situation in the United States. And, they were extremely grateful. At 11:00 they all got up and left as if a bell had rung. George Meany said, "Oh my god, what did I do now?" This was in the 60's. These fellows don't have the cab fares which would be a long cab fare back to London, so they are taking the public transport. It has nothing to do with you, I told Meany. It is just that it's the last bus back. That I say, was typical of Meany when he came to a place abroad, he would cooperate very much with the labor attaché. Not only would he bring you along to all his visits, but he would be very good with the press.

*Q: Was Vietnam the primary issue?*

BYRNE: It was a major issue of the time, and Meany was a great supporter of American foreign policy as a general statement. He might have strong differences at home on domestic policy, but when the president asked him to support an issue on the Hill and publicly, unless it was a matter of morality, personal morality or union issues, he defended it very strongly, and did not hold up the administration, Republican or Democrat for doing that. He would fight his local domestic or national battles with them and say what he felt about the president or the Congress' position, but in foreign policy he was excellent. I am jumping a little bit, but when James Schlesinger, who was Secretary of Defense, came to Norway, he was having a problem making sure that labor supported the issue. I can't remember exactly what the issue was. I asked him had he ever talked to Meany. He was rather dumbfounded to think that Mr. Meany would be a supporter of anything unless it was strictly national or it was a Democratic issue. So, he went back and did chat with Mr. Meany about whatever that issue was and was grateful for my help on that. Also, Mr. Meany appreciated Schlesinger coming. It gave him a chance to share views in a private as well as public position on it.

*Q: Did Mr. Meany have any reservations himself about our involvement in Vietnam?*

BYRNE: Not to my knowledge. It is a good time away, but not to my knowledge. I think he accepted, as I have to say I accepted I think, the domino theory. The situation was serious enough that if we didn't support and win our victory there, that it would have serious repercussions. I am sure that he had certain reservations about carrying out the policy. Having said that, it is too long ago to remember specifically what were the issues

he might have had any differences on.

*Q: Are there any other final observations about London you'd like to make before we turn to your next assignment?*

BYRNE: The excitement of working in London with a Labor government and the position of the trade union movement for an American labor attaché one of great satisfaction. My family enjoyed it very much. They were all young and were able to take advantage of all the pluses in London. I have often said that as far as pure job satisfaction, I had more satisfaction in those five years than any other years. That is not to belittle any of the other assignments, even the ambassadorial assignments. It is just that this was such a crucial time with Britain and the responsibilities I was given that I have always remembered it well.

*Q: OK, shall we turn then to your next assignment. I believe you went to the senior seminar in 1969.*

BYRNE: Yes, '70. I found that an interesting assignment. Perhaps one of the aims of that as you know is to acquaint those people who are representing the country abroad with a unique opportunity to become extremely informed and aware of U.S. developments, and to see how America works so they can improve their way of representing U.S. interests abroad and also representing American culture and society. For the labor aspect of it, as you are aware, it is a series of seminars conducted by very senior people in the United States from top people in the U.S. Cabinet, to university professors to labor leaders to business leaders. All this complemented by trips around the country. We went to Puerto Rico to look into specific aspects of American life. Examples would range from traveling in the then-called ghettos of the United States riding with the police on a night shift.

*Q: So this was right after the riots in Washington and Newark and Watts and a whole host of other problems.*

BYRNE: Turmoil resulting from the changes going on in the United States in addition to the problems in Washington DC, the riots in other places. I was impressed with the police I went with, they didn't change their modus operandi just because I was in the car. While I knew that they might have had a certain discriminatory bent in carrying out their job, I was very impressed with how honest and fair they were and their desire to try to solve the problems they had at hand. We had nothing serious. We went into one house where the grandmother called because her little boy, a little black child and it was a black grandmother, and they were very poor because they only had one light in the house and several chairs. The little boy wouldn't do his homework. The police got down and chatted with the little fellow telling him how good his grandmother was and what she was doing for him and he owed it to her if not to himself. I was impressed watching them handle that because when we went into the living room, I didn't know what we were going to run into.

*Q: What city were you in?*

BYRNE: Chicago. I should have mentioned that.

*Q: Chicago's south side?*

BYRNE: Yes. And we went up into the high rises. Because they were the police, they would be urinated on and stones would be thrown as we were coming into the building. That was all in a day's work. We went up to see some lady up there who had some problem. She wanted us to see if we could find her child or something. We also had to visit another lady who had some type of a problem. Earlier in the day we had met with Mayor Daley.

*Q: Richard Daley Senior.*

BYRNE: That gives you some flavor of the type of things we did, and sometimes we would go to large construction projects or a dam project or university. I remember we were up at Harvard at the Kennedy School of Government.

We also went to Puerto Rico. We used one of the old Air Force Ones. Everybody fought to sit in President Johnson's seat, the big chair. It was quite an experience. The Senior Seminar is about a ten month period and you could reflect what labor was all about and why they held certain positions and what they did which was very helpful and informative and educational to the other members of the senior seminar. You got to know them on a personal basis, and they knew you on a personal basis. Some who had a definite bias against trade unions had a chance to see that there are two stories. Also in the discussions which you had with various people around the country, whether it was the educators or the cabinet secretaries, you had a chance to discuss with them and reflect a labor point of view. I profited the other way around, hearing people from the CIA or the military or the Commerce Department who were represented, or Agriculture. It proved to be excellent. I saw that I could be doing something, the old spirit that if you are not achieving something or making something, you are not doing anything.

*Q: Do you think it is possible to overcome the entrenched bias against labor in the State Department?*

BYRNE: I think it is difficult. I did have some impact and they had some impact on me. Like with the military to understand where they were coming from.

*Q: Well your own background probably gave you credibility. Your experience with the teamsters and then your family connection as well.*

BYRNE: While you didn't necessarily go as an apostle of labor, there was no way not to be one because of the issues that kept coming up all the time. I did write my paper on modular housing. Most of them did it on some foreign policy issue, but since they were running out of cash, I volunteered and told them that I would do something on that because to me it had some kind of a potential profit for seeing some part of the American

experience. More than once I had used knowledge I had gotten abroad to I suppose make people think I knew more about housing than I did. But it came in handy. Even into one of the last things I did pro bono in the Ukraine. I set up the NGO for privatizing of housing, and also for setting up small little firms to repair housing because underneath the communist regime, they never had the private enterprise for that type of thing. It was all done by the city administration. Much of Soviet construction work couldn't have been shoddier.

*Q: What time frame was that?*

BYRNE: Well, I was in the Ukraine '96-'97. That wasn't the sole reason I went over there, but it did help me in some of the things I was looking at and some of the proposals I was making for them, how they could approach the matter of housing. There were some very interesting people that we met. Cleo Noel was in the seminar. You remember, he was killed, murdered, shot.

*Q: Sudan was it?*

BYRNE: Yes. We had Sam Lewis in the seminar.

*Q: Yes, Ambassador to Israel. People who were moving up in the foreign service.*

*After the senior seminar you went to work for Phil Delaney as a deputy special assistant for labor.*

BYRNE: Yes. I was supposed to take Phil's position when he stepped down. Phil, as you remember, his health wasn't all that great, so Phil was not planning to stay there forever. As it turned out, he did retire, and then shortly after, he died. I enjoyed working with Phil because Phil had a great background. He had a great sense of humor. I never got tired of hearing his stories. One of the most interesting aspects of working in that position was knowing John Hannah who headed AID. He was a remarkable person

*Q: Was the office responsible for both AID affairs and State and labor at that time?*

BYRNE: Correct. The trade union movement had put certain people into the positions. John Dillon was an old CIO type there. Herb Baker was working there too. Herb was very industrious and a good man to have on your staff. I had known Herb for many years, so we got along well. A lot of the job was to ensure that there was an adequate AID input into the AID program either from the projects themselves or from the people who were involved in them. There is always the difficulty in any program in government you know that everybody has vital forces competing for it. Unless you were able, as Phil was able to do strenuously, you could lose out on them. Mr. Hannah always used to say to me, I am not going to put it in the files. Would you write a little note for me personally why you think this is important. It would be very helpful to me. So, I saw a lot of John.

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[Note: The following is from an interview of Ambassador Byrne conducted by Morrie Weisz in 1991.]

*Q: Well now you are finishing up as Delaney's Deputy and then you went over to management.*

BYRNE: Over to management because they needed an executive order for a Labor Management Relations Policy for the Foreign Service.

*Q: How well I remember. Yes. (laughs)*

BYRNE: I worked very closely with now-Ambassador Jim Michael who was in the Legal Department and we worked with both AFSA and AFGE on it. We were faced with the very difficult problem, though, of the constant shifting from post to post of personnel, which means that a person could be management one day and the next month he could be back underneath the employee. . . .

*Q: Did you have anything to do with writing the Presidential Executive Order?*

BYRNE: Jim Michael and I wrote it. The two of us wrote it. It turned out to have a certain Rube Goldberg aspect to it. And this was a weakness. It was a different Executive Order. The strength of the order that we did get in was a grievance procedure. And another part, which - sometimes you overstate your own role in it. I said that the only way was to get somebody to chair that who would be above reproach, who would be a nationally recognized person.

*Q: That's how you got Bill Simpkin in.*

BYRNE: That's right. And Bill Simpkin was gotten. They were looking for someone retired, so they took me very seriously on that. They took Bill Simpkin and they looked at the retired Supreme Court - I mean to show how serious they were about it. And then they used strong pressure at the highest level to get him to agree to it. But that showed that they were serious about this. As you will recall, at the time that this was all written, there was open revolt in the Foreign Service. There was a serious problem.

*Q: Right. Let me try to put a time frame on this. The Executive Order was written at the end of 1971 when I came back from Delhi.*

BYRNE: It would have to be around that time because I came back in '69, '70, and then went right to work on it with them.

*Q: Right. I came back in December of '71. The Executive Order had been written and I found certain flaws with it from the point of view of the election procedure that I got involved in. But I thought that was before the Grievance Committee was set up.*

BYRNE: No, not. . . .

*Q: They had a grievance procedure but not under the Executive Order.*

BYRNE: Not under this type, that's right.

*Q: But Bill was already there, and John Warnock was working for him.*

BYRNE: Correct. And this was to my mind what made it worthwhile because they needed something. And they needed something above reproach. So it couldn't be. . . . Because you would have had the same problem. Who was going to serve on it? Once that happened, they realized that this was a serious effort and it changed to a lot of top management people. There were problems on it, though. Jim and I worked one time in August, for example, for 22 hours straight because the President was leaving and we had to get it to him. The air conditioning went out in the State Department.

*Q: Oh my God!*

BYRNE: And the day we finished it after that and put the final thing on it, we were over in the Civil Service Commission office, and that's where I collapsed and had my original heart attack and went into the hospital. So we worked very hard on it.

*Q: So that was toward the end of '71?*

BYRNE: That's correct. Because I came back in '69.

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[Note: interview by Don Kienzle resumes here.]

*Q: Then moved on to ambassador. What was the date that would have been? 1973?*

BYRNE: That would be right.

*Q: Ambassador to Norway.*

BYRNE: Yes and I remember that is when they had sent my name up. As I told you, Bill Macomber wanted me to be his DCM in Turkey. Then Macomber said no, but I understand anyway. I don't blame you because I know they are thinking about making you an ambassador. I had heard that rumor. And then one day I did get a call from Secretary Rogers.

*Q: Did he inform you at that point that you had been selected?*

BYRNE: Yeah, that is what he was about. He put it this way so that I could feel that I could support it, "I want to have a talk." It went on for quite awhile. It was a very long

talk. He had been with the President the night before, on the yacht. At that time I didn't know the President was having as much trouble as he was. This is all I guess somewhere the beginning, the start, '73 I guess it was. I can't remember exactly the time.

*Q: Watergate was summer of '72.*

BYRNE: This had to be going on because he went out to see him and he said, and I asked him did he take up a couple of issues we were interested in from the State Department. You know, fighting with the Security Council over there with Kissinger. I asked him did he take this up with the President? He said no, the President wanted me to talk problems that were his problems but Rogers didn't state which problems. I didn't feel that I had the right to interject mine. You might as well know I disagree with you on that. I said, "If you have an opportunity like that just one-on-one, I would not have felt," but as I understand he was talking some of this Watergate stuff. But it was just the two of them on the yacht that night. That's all that it was. We were talking substance about me but also substance about the department and other issues. I always liked Rogers, but I never saw him as a very strong character, you know. Kissinger was too much for him.

*Q: I think the conventional wisdom was Henry Kissinger was running foreign policy out of the National Security Council.*

BYRNE: Yeah. And if Rogers felt as he did, that he owed it to the President to help him in his other problems. I have never seen too much in writing, so I don't know about what Rogers did or didn't do. I can see it, but he was a very decent type of person. The few times I met him that always came across. Anyway then I went to Norway. They were first considering whether to send me to Latin America. I always said that unless I get my Spanish down much better than it is now, I am not interested. So that is where we ended up, going there. I found it a very rewarding experience.

*Q: What were the issues in Norway?*

BYRNE: Norway was one of our best allies; strong on principle. At that time we were trying to sell F-16 and the F-15 aircraft. I have a letter from Lewis who was head of the Air Force back then congratulating the relationship and the work of the government and industry and the military in bringing about a solution, a very happy solution to the F-16. As far as we were concerned it could have been the 16 or the 17. They were both good planes and they were both U.S. planes. The General Dynamics people paid more attention to what we were telling them than the Northrop people. The Northrop people unfortunately made the mistake thinking they knew everything; when they came to ask help, it was too late. We had an excellent relationship with the foreign government. Frydenlund, who was the Foreign Minister, finally said to me, "We consider you a friend myself. I don't think Americans understand what we mean by friend. We consider them part of the family." The relationship was excellent because Norway-American relations were superb.

The French were trying to sell the Mirage, and the Swedish were trying to sell the Vega.

There were allegations, whether they were true or not, that the French were willing to use some money under the table. Anyway, I went to the top people in the government in the Labor Party and the Conservative Party, the prime minister, and I said to them: Would you people just argue this in the parliament. Forget politics, and argue on the merits of the case and then make up your mind, and not make it a political issue. Can you imagine going to our Congress and saying that? They did it. They felt that it was very important. They were still very mindful of what happened in the last war, what happened to Norway and how the Germans moved in. There was also Ase North which was a NATO base they had in Norway. So, they were quite concerned about the significance of this plane. We were very helpful, from our point of view, to the government in helping the American company. This was not just for Norway. It was Holland; it was Denmark. There were four countries involved. There was about a half to a billion dollars in sales. That was big money, and we played a very big role in it. As I said, Lewis' letter alone said that was one of the finest examples of our government working to a satisfactory end. That was a valuable experience in which we played an important role. Another role we played was keeping the nuclear sub. They wanted the nuclear sub kept out of trips around their base. That was an issue we wanted to convince them to play. A lot of our business with Norway involved defense issues because they were big issues to them. One was Spitsbergen. You went up to the border of Norway. It is just like a North and South Korea, they were that close.

*Q: The Soviets.*

BYRNE: The Soviets. You could see them. This was very real, you know, what was going to trip the wire, what would be the trip wire if anything happened. The Soviets had done certain things at the time which had caused a little bit of concern to NATO and also to Norway, so when the ambassadors were having their visit, we were all going to make a trip to Spitsbergen with the king which was really symbolic. Unfortunately, it got fogged out. We were all up there in the tundra on the border.

*Q: The symbolism.*

BYRNE: But the Russians got it. I remember James Schlesinger came over, Secretary of Defense then. He was up there on the border. You know he ruffled them. You had your field glasses on and you were looking at them and they were looking at you, so it was that real. It was not just an idle threat. You could really rely on Norway. We as Americans knew they were excellent allies. They were always straightforward. A small, little country, but what they believed in, they believed in. Another thing they celebrated in a mammoth way was the 150th anniversary of their citizens immigrating to the United States. We took the king to the White House and went with him. He and his top officials came and they visited around certain places in the United States. I took them to the Statue of Liberty. All the newspaper guys say, "Hey King how about a picture."

*Q: Was he accommodating?*

BYRNE: Oh very much so. He loved the United States. He had been here during the war,

somewhere on Long Island. He went someplace and there was some problem in NATO. He gave a very strong speech, and also on the Russians. Iceland. He wasn't supposed to get involved, but he gave a very strong speech, pro-NATO. In a sense he was kind of the figure. He didn't get involved in the politics of it much even though he was heavily interested in it. When he felt it was necessary, he would put himself on the line.

They all came and we had a three day extended party in Oslo and in Bergen. Had people like Humphrey and Mondale.

*Q: This was celebrating the emigration.*

BYRNE: Yeah. They wanted to celebrate with this big thing.

*Q: They had a lot of seamen didn't they?*

BYRNE: Yes indeed. The point was to celebrate the fact that they had come to the United States starting 150 years ago. They had this relationship with the United States and it was excellent. I mean I am telling you, it was just three days of banquets in the evening, speeches, dances. Hubert Humphrey, every Norwegian lady in Bergen insisted on dancing with him. He stayed up until two in the morning. Humphrey spoke to the people because the navy was putting on a big Fourth of July party for all the people. There were a lot of Americans there too because of the oil people and he also got some of the Norwegians involved. They had invited Humphrey to give a speech, but he was still at the banquet, and you don't come late for the king. There is no excuse for being late. I had to go down and tell Humphrey, "Now look, you have got no more than eight minutes, and I am going to have to get you out of here." He gave a magnificent speech. He got up and said, "I don't want you to ever forget how important the youth are." Then he went through the Declaration of Independence and the age of the people who wrote it. They were all in their late 20's or early 30's. And the Constitution. He said, "I just want you to reflect that these are the people who we owe so much to, and they were all young." And, he sat down. Excellent speech. The next morning after the banquet and whatnot, I am out at 8:00 going to thank the navy for what they had done in the town, and there's old Hubert even though he's been up 'til two dancing. He said, "Gotta shake hands with those from Minnesota on the ship." But then they were also interested in talking to him because he was on the military arms or appropriation committee or something. He was very knowledgeable.

*Q: Senate armed services committee.*

BYRNE: We also had a picnic on the beach. It was everybody from Liv Ullmann to the politicians to certain business people. Then we came to the United States to celebrate here. It just affirmed the excellent relationship between the two countries.

At certain times we wanted to keep our nuclear subs moving around bases, and sometimes the Norwegians, their inclination was to say no, we don't want them in. We always had to talk them into it. They would always come around for you.

*Q: Was it sort of a two track diplomacy. The politicians would be saying one thing in public while in private you would be persuading them.*

BYRNE: Yes, there was a little of that, but most of it they played the game. If they knew it was important, they didn't make too much of a public issue out of it.

Another thing which almost became a major issue was Kissinger being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It is in Kissinger's book. His version I don't 100% agree on. I will quote this book. It is Henry Kissinger's, Years of Upheaval pages 370 and following. I won't read all of them, but I'll pick out a couple of paragraphs. It says October 16, it was in 1973. "U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese politburo member Le Duc Tho were awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize today for their efforts to officially end the Vietnam War." That was the press release that he published. Kissinger says, "I had not even known I was a candidate, and threw the dispatch on the table. My colleagues read it with astonishment and jubilation. They congratulated me but without real passion. We were ill at ease. There was no other comparable honor, the statesman's final test is to whether he has made a contribution to the well being of mankind. And, I knew without the ability to enforce the agreement, the structure of peace in Indo-China was unlikely to last. I would have been far happier with recognition for a less precarious achievement. Without false modesty, I am proud of what I accomplished and would accomplish in the next few years in the Middle East. Mrs. Aase Lionæs, chairman of the Nobel Peace Committee of the Norwegian Parliament issued a statement explaining the award in terms of the world's relief at the end of the Vietnam War. I quote her, 'News of the Paris agreement brought a wave of joy and hope to the entire world. Two chief negotiators brought their talents and good will there in order to obtain a peace agreement. The Norwegian Nobel Peace Committee hopes that the undersigning parties will feel a moral responsibility for seeing that the Paris agreements are followed.'" I am paraphrasing here. At that time the Peace Prize itself was worth about \$65,000. It has astronomically increased since then. Kissinger was invited to Oslo to receive the prize from Olaf V, the king, on December 10, and to deliver a local lecture there within six months afterwards. Kissinger goes on to say that the moment must be painful for President Nixon that Kissinger got it. He says that Nixon might well have won the award for the Vietnam peace and other achievements, but Watergate destroyed his dreams. He said, I went to the oval office. It happened to be the day that Melvin Laird became the first senior official publicly to discuss possible impeachment proceedings. Laird had told him he had warned the President he ran the risk if he reneged on the tapes, the release of the tapes. So it was a touchy time. Then Kissinger issued a statement in which he said how important this was to him for recognition of the central purpose of the President's foreign policy which is the achievement of a lasting peace in Indo China -- build up the President in this. While I shall receive the award with my old colleagues in the search for peace, I hope that this occasion will at last symbolize the end of the anguish or suffering that Vietnam has meant for so many millions of people around the world. That was the statement that was released. Now back to his book. He says, "Normally the award of the Nobel Peace Prize is the occasion of great national pride, but our division has been too deep. To many, treating a Nobel Peace Prize as a national accomplishment would have

meant acceptance of a cause they had bitterly fought. Media's reaction was restrained, to put it mildly." He quotes a number of newspapers. Kissinger says his old partner, George Ball, was quoted in the October 17, *Washington Post* as remarking, the Norwegians must have a sense of humor. Then he objected to the award. Nevertheless in the spirit of the occasion, I sent a message to Le Duc Tho on the 16th of October hoping to inject a human note into the tedious exchanges on the deterioration of the Paris agreement. He says Le Duc Tho didn't reply. Being moved by bourgeois sentimentalities like peace and reconciliation, it was beyond me to be moved by that. In the interval, he had written to the Nobel committee declining the award because the Paris agreement, he said, was not being implemented. It was another insolence by North Vietnam whose transgressions have in fact turned the agreement into a farce. Le Duc Tho cabled him in a similar vein. That is Kissinger, saying that the Paris agreement on Vietnam had been very seriously violated etc. So, on November 29, Kissinger sent a cable which I had to read to Dr. Lionæs and tell her, the Nobel Committee is asked to donate the entire proceeds to a scholarship for children of American servicemen killed or missing in action. The Paula and Louis Kissinger Scholarship fund named in honor of my parents was established for this purpose. This story isn't what happened at all.

*Q: OK, shall we get the real version?*

BYRNE: What happened was that after Le Duc Tho was through, Kissinger cabled me and told me to tell Lionæs and the committee he was not accepting it. Well, this would have had tremendous ramifications within Norway, because they went out of their way they thought to make sure that the two of them got it. They thought they also made clear the peace award is not given just for getting peace but even if you don't get it, if you play a role in trying to get this moving. Anyway, they said this would be a very serious situation and couldn't I do something about it. So, I cabled back, it was a Sunday night, I cabled back and told Kissinger he should accept this because it was going to be a serious problem. We would have to look at the papers and check with the State Department to see exactly what was in that cable, but that was the gist of it. In the meantime, I told Lionæs I would do that. Now this was late at night, Sunday night. She is also the speaker of the parliament, she is head of this committee, so she says I'll meet you on the bench in the palace park tomorrow and you tell me yes or no. Well I said I am delighted to meet you anyplace but if that is the way you want it, fine. So, in the meantime, they cabled back and then Kissinger said he would accept it and donate the entire proceeds to a scholarship fund for the children of American servicemen who had been killed or missing in action. This is the Paula and Louis Kissinger scholarship fund named in honor of his parents -- established for this purpose. So then it became known that at the ceremony on December 10, and I am quoting in his book.

*Q: And this is accurate.*

BYRNE: Yes. Kissinger says, "I have learned my presence at the award ceremony would lead to massive demonstrations by anti-Vietnam groups." Well at least there would be in Oslo. "The Norwegian government, though unfailingly courteous and helpful seemed relieved when I used the pretext of a NATO ministerial meeting to have the award

accepted on my behalf by our Ambassador to Norway, Thomas Byrne. Slipping into the auditorium at the University of Oslo by a rear entrance in order to evade snowballs and anti-American demonstrations, Ambassador Byrne read my statement." So there was a statement which I read over Euro television which had a vast audience. We never feared it would be a massive demonstration because the Norwegians would be able to handle that. But there would have been demonstrations which we knew there would be. We didn't exactly know what would turn out, but a few snowballs were thrown, nothing serious beyond that. The security was very tight.

Later, on April 30, 1975, which is about 18 months later Saigon fell. Kissinger wrote to Mr. Lionæs, I am reading from his book. "Returning the Peace Prize and the equivalent of the cash award." The Nobel committee refused to accept them implying that intervening events in no way reduce the committee's appreciation of Mr. Kissinger's sincere efforts to get a ceasefire agreement put in to force in '73. Then I gave him the award in London. We had a European ambassadors meeting, and that is when I gave him that. They covered it on evening television home in the United States. So that was the story of the Peace Prize, but it was one that he had turned down, and the embassy had convinced him that he really had to accept it because otherwise the ramifications would have been serious.

Norway was a beautiful country. Spectacular country. It was a great country. So we enjoyed it tremendously because it was satisfying, but it was not the usual type. It did not have Israeli type of issues or Middle East type of nations. There weren't crucial issues because they were such good allies, and the ones that did come were settled very well. Then I left in April of '76.

*Q: You went to Prague in '76.*

BYRNE: Yes. When George Meany found out that I was going to Prague, he thought that was a big mistake. He said your talents are to get along with people, and you are not going to be able to do that there. He was 1000% correct. But you know, it was one of those things. He had lunch with me and he said I am sorry you are going there because it is just not your cup of tea. We did find it a fascinating experience, but he couldn't have been more correct.

I insisted that I wanted to go down and see a mine. So they took us to their best mine, and it was a horrible experience. We came up afterwards to take a shower before they were having a banquet for us. They said well, Mr. Ambassador, we know your labor background, what would you as a labor man say about this? I could be diplomatic enough not to say anything, but since you asked me my opinion, they would have shut this mine down in five minutes at home it is so bad.

*Q: These were safety issues?*

BYRNE: Yes.

Another time I said I would like to meet a few trade union leaders. "Oh, we can work that out." The trade union leaders, when we got to there, that was the one day they had a meeting someplace. They carried the thing right up to the last moment hoping I would forget about it.

*Q: What were the main issues you dealt with while you were in Prague.*

BYRNE: There was a cultural agreement that was supposed to be negotiated, and we fooled around a lot on that. There was also the gold. We had taken their gold at the end of the war, and when the communists took over, we still had the gold here. Meantime the gold had become... They really wanted to settle this thing, but on what terms. We were slowly reaching some type of an agreement. Gold had become quite valuable because of the change in the rate. I left before that was reached. I was trying to reach a deal where I wanted us to take the gold, give them back what it was worth when we took it, this kind of a deal, and use it for some good purpose, whatever that may be. We didn't reach it, even though Senator Moynihan's aid he would support me and Russell Long who was very difficult, said that they would support me if I could get this thing settled. The Russians wanted a settlement. They called me once and said what can we do?

*Q: They weren't selling gold on the international market.*

BYRNE: I think it was another issue between the Czechs and us, and I think the Russians would have just as soon seen it pass by. Now we never did really find out what their reason was. We always had trouble with them picking up and detaining newspaper people. Paul Hofmann was about as good a friend as they had, which didn't mean that Paul Hofmann was a friend, but he was a fair guy. They pulled him off the train when it was going over the border. They pulled him off the train, and he called out, "Call the American Embassy in Austria." He probably said tell them I am here, but the people, all they did get was enough to call the embassy and say the people thought it was a newspaper person.

*Q: Which newspaper was he with?*

BYRNE: *New York Times*. He lived in Rome, and he wrote a lot of travel stuff at that time. I knew Paul Hofmann was in the country, so I immediately knew what it was and that they had pulled him off the train. I knew the Czech foreign minister was going to Sweden the next day. I waited until about 3:00 in the morning and called. I got him up out of bed. He denied he knew anything about that. Well, I said, I can tell you it is a fact, and I certainly want something done about this.

In the meantime, Paul had asked is there any place I could stay. They said, well, Paul is 65 or in his 60's and he has got the bag and the typewriter. So they sent him to a hotel down the street a half a kilometer or kilometer away. Later, he comes back to the station, and he takes his shoes off, and they complain that is just typical of Americans. The next morning they tell him he can leave but he has got to walk six kilometers to the border with his bag and typewriter. But I got him out of there. That is what they did.

There was another one who was held seven hours. He had been interviewing people who were protesters. He asked what the Czechs were doing. They held him up for six hours, took all his notes and manuscript pages. He didn't get his notes back. That was typical. The atmosphere was very bad.

Another thing we did which was good. We did have a certain amount of cultural events. We had Zubin Mehta. It was a great thing. He and his wife came over. She was Czech or of Czech descent. At the end of his concert, unbeknownst to me, he played The Stars and Stripes, and the people got out of their seats and cheered. Of course the foreign ministry was convinced that this was an American plot. It may have been, but I didn't know anything about it. Anyway, I thought it was great; the people thought it was great. Then we had Sarah Vaughn. Benny Goodman. Benny Goodman was terrific. Benny came over and we had a lot of the musicians came to the house. We had a luncheon. They also walked off with all of my silver.

*Q: You're kidding!*

BYRNE: Well, you felt sorry for them. But what was very touching to Benny he told me, was that some guy came with a record, and in the folder kept all, he said he played it every night, to have Benny autograph it. The record he said was years old. He had a concert that went over very big except that they had him down in a firetrap of a basement about four flights down. I mean if there had been a fire there, it would have been terrible. I mean that is the things they did in those days. Benny had a jam session with a couple of his buddies; that is what it amounted to, and they had a good time.

*Q: Were these Czech musicians?*

BYRNE: No, these were American. It was so hot there, that Benny almost passed out. Some people were taking off their shirts and all this kind of stuff. I know my wife got a little bit frightened because of the crowd. You are trying to move up the stairs to one exit, and they are jammed in. It was pretty tough. But, Benny was very good; I sat with him.

*Q: How long were you in Prague?*

BYRNE: I left in '78.

*Q: 1978, a little over two years.*

BYRNE: Yes, I came in April, and then I left in September or October, maybe two and a half years. Then we had Johnny Cash. There is a picture with Johnny up there singing, and I'm singing with him. These events do have an impact. Johnny played in the hockey rink before 13,000 people. People came from as far as Bratislava. I don't know how they decided who got paid or what got paid, but for those people it would be the equivalent of a week's salary for some of them.

*Q: Is that right?*

BYRNE: That place was jammed for the few sessions he had. I told Johnny I was always frustrated. I told him the one thing I can't do in life and would love to do is sing. I'm pretty good in the shower. Well, he said, "I can't go on without the ambassador that night." So, I have got to come up and sing one with him. He says, "Oh Susannah" I know about a line or two of it. I said, "Help me out; I don't know the words." He says, "Just go bump-ditty-bump-bump, and his wife, June Carter, she'll go bump-ditty-bump with you." We got away with it. I got a lot of publicity on that in the States. Sometimes they would play games on you. We had a concert come in, what do you call the music, not rock.

*Q: Bluegrass?*

BYRNE: Bluegrass. Somewhere they killed it. They weren't going to allow it to go on. I forget what reason they used. I think they were afraid bluegrass would be too popular with the youth. Fred Clinton, my PAO, said, "Here is an idea. These guys are here; they can just practice on the embassy grounds. We won't say anything down at the chancery," because there were big grounds on the hill. Of course the word got out. I don't know how many people were there by the fences. Oh no, we said, this is just a practice. You always had to play games. We won. Instead of having maybe only a couple of hundred people, we had 1,000-2,000. The secret police were right across the street. They saw because they lived right across from my house anyway, but this was down on the grounds of the chancery. That was the type of things you had to do. They did allow stuff on the Fourth of July. I could have a big affair, and we always had hot dogs. We had a mammoth affair, 750 people. But if people didn't receive permission to go, they were punished, and four people came and they lost their pensions.

*Q: Is that right? And were the guards stationed at the gates to check who was authorized.*

BYRNE: They had pictures and everything. It happened to be easy because the headquarters was right across the street, so they wouldn't have any problem.

*Q: So they photographed. They didn't have their own security guards at your front gate the way the Soviets did.*

BYRNE: They would stop people. Even if they didn't take a picture, somebody knew and reported. The place was full of them; you can be sure of that. Then when we had the presidential election, we had a mock election, we ran the thing the next day for them.

*Q: This would have been the election of 1976?*

BYRNE: Yeah, I guess so. Sure '76.

*Q: So the big emphasis then was really on the cultural exchange program. I mean that is how you reached them.*

BYRNE: Yeah. Also another way we reached them which was good or bad, television. They all had television coming over from Germany. They weren't supposed to have them, but they had aerials up, so the people who were up in that part of the country could easily get a lot of television from Germany. Some of the top officials weren't very decent people, but one or two of them at least would say, yeah, you Americans, because of you and your television and your music, all our kids now take English.

*Q: Oh, is that right.*

BYRNE: Yeah, and they said, you know you can't stop them. They all learn English, they all know your music, they all know this. You couldn't stop them. This was Tomaczyk, The great cardinal. He had been in a jail first, and they were afraid that he would be in trouble or cause trouble so the Vatican never revealed he was a cardinal until after. My daughter wasn't confirmed, so he said, "I'll handle that." He came to the party. So the next day I get a note from him. He said, "We are going to have two celebrations. I am going to confirm you daughter, and we are going to celebrate the Fourth of July." He was a great man. I told you about Holy Thursday?

*Q: No I don't think so.*

BYRNE: I go up to Holy Thursday which is a big religious forum. I also was playing games because the cathedral was right by the president's palace. I go in and Dutch Gray, he is happy to see the flag outside the cathedral. I go in and he sends me word that he would like me to come up to the front row along with my daughter. She is in her jeans and whatnot. Now religion, I'll say I am not very good at it, but I do come. About the fourth time I said I better go up there. So, I go up. We had the kiss of peace as part of the mass where everybody shakes hands. When the kiss of peace came, everybody in the church came up and shook my hand. So I got called to the foreign office for that. I said that is what we do all the time. That was the type of thing that went on.

*Q: Did any of the officials sort of free wheel at all or did they all follow the hard line?*

BYRNE: They followed the hard line. And they were tough, they were always trying to be holier than the pope.

*Q: Is that right? There was no crack in the armor?*

BYRNE: No, there was no crack. The residence was something though. You never saw that.

*Q: Yeah, I visited Prague at one point on business. I was impressed with the building. It looked like a baroque museum almost. I think it is one of the most impressive buildings in the foreign service.*

BYRNE: 7.5 million dollars of furniture.

*Q: It really looked like a museum to me.*

BYRNE: It is.

*Q: I guess the only question I had was how could the GSO keep the plumbing in order?*

BYRNE: This was something that they considered me nuts, and I did this twice in my career. I knew they needed a new roof, and there was money. I could have put it off because I was leaving, but I used that. I thought, you have got an obligation to the State Department. Everybody thought I was crazy. You are leaving, let the next guy worry about these things.

*Q: The conventional wisdom is that you use it or you won't get it next year.*

BYRNE: I said, I am going to take a chance that they will respect me for it. If they don't, they don't. I did all right, so I had no problems. I could have got it. In Prague, the other big thing we had was the economic council. The Americans had it and they met once a year. It was to promote trade. I don't know how much trade was ever promoted, but the Germans were the ones who did the big trade. We are big in there now, though. Czechs would come to your formal things or formal dinner, but there was very little real progress made. We talked in a circle at times how we could solve the gold negotiations or this type of thing. But, it wasn't like in other places you went to where you did real substance of business. It was very difficult to do.

*Q: Probably the Czechs were afraid that if they tried to break the armor that the secret police would be interrogating them on the next day.*

BYRNE: Absolutely. So they tried to be more communist than the communists.

*Q: If I recall during that period, their GNP was sort of in the number 12 or 13, something like that in the world.*

BYRNE: Another big thing I used to do was visit the war monuments because we had the first war and VE Day. Believe it or not, in some places they would move the monuments.

*Q: They moved the monuments?*

BYRNE: I would go to put a wreath and the people would say Thomas. There is this one guy, let's see if I can find it. It was great. Another time they came and I said look, I didn't want to get them into trouble. A bus load of them came. They were there and came over and wanted to know what was happening. They said fine but we want our picture taken. Well then take a picture, but you guys are going to suffer.

*Q: Someone is going to be asking.*

BYRNE: I was going to go Pilsen, you know, where Patton arrived. The USIA radio said

I would be attending mass at the cathedral at 11:00. They moved all the priests out and shut the cathedral. A couple of them were standing outside. They wanted me to come. They didn't lock the church, but nobody could get in. A couple of them came and wanted to get in, and I said, "It is only going to hurt you, and it isn't worth it." First we go in and there is nobody there. Frank Queeg comes up and he says, "Sir, this reminds me of a synagogue on Christmas Eve." Then we found out the church they locked it all. A couple of people said nope, we are coming in here. They have hurt us so bad, they can't hurt us anymore. I used to go every year and put a monument there, a wreath. This is the one where the people insisted their picture get taken with me. That is on the border. That is a war monument. I went all over the country doing this. They loved it. That is what you did, and the people would come if they knew you were there, so you made your presence felt. I always flew the flag no matter where I went because it got so much attention. You knew there was still a lot of pro American feeling and if the day ever came, which I never dreamt it would come this fast, but you knew it was coming. Then some of my people kept in touch with some of the dissidents.

*Q: Of course, Czechoslovakia in the inter war period had developed a fairly good democracy, so that there was some residual there I would imagine to fall back on later on.*

BYRNE: I mean you just saw the buildings falling apart, other type of stuff not being kept up. The streets were fine. You knew it had to collapse sometime.

*Q: You didn't suspect it would be another eleven years or so.*

BYRNE: Somewhere we had lunch. I sat at a table with Brezhnev. Brezhnev was a character. All he does is drink. Take a shot, follow it down with a beer. This is lunch. He has a guy behind him who is trying to get him to eat, like mom is trying to get little Johnny to eat. Then finally, he just gets up and leaves us.

*Q: Was there any conversation?*

BYRNE: We had a little, particularly with me, he had a little small talk. You know not anything substantive. Small talk. In Moscow they were having a meeting and he liked the guy's watch. So he takes it and puts it on, and that is the end of the watch.

*Q: An official?*

BYRNE: State Department, one of the secretaries. The secretary's office was over there on official business. They were either negotiating, or they were meeting with Brezhnev. He likes the watch, looks at it and the next thing, he puts it on. So I needled him about that you know.

*Q: I'm not going to show you my watch.*

BYRNE: He thought it was funny. There was a little bit of that kind of stuff, but nothing

serious. So that is really the type of thing, and that's how life was spent in Prague.

*Q: It must have been just the opposite of Norway in many respects.*

BYRNE: Total. From an open society with great allies to a country which, well, it was a beautiful city. Prague is the most beautiful city.

*Q: It is a museum.*

*Anything else you would like to add about foreign service and your career?*

BYRNE: I think the foreign service as we knew it was a wonderful career. I think we felt we were involved in a serious undertaking which helped not only the country but also helped mankind. We also enjoyed the people we were with. I think that as a general statement they were dedicated people. I mean you are going to find your exceptions in anything, but I think as a group they were. I still enjoy the contacts which I have with them. Now we are in a whole new era, not just because the cold war is over, but I think the whole aspect of globalization and where it is going, the Internet does mean that distances are falling which is going to require a much more serious look at developing some type of a foreign policy with some depth into it. I frankly have been disappointed that we haven't had that in the last two administrations, particularly the last administration under Clinton. I think that Reagan not only for the right reasons, as far as the cold war worked out, he did play a position. I don't say that he was the point, as some Republicans would like to make that without him it would never, that is not realistic. But, I don't think that we have had with Clinton, sad to say, as a Democrat, I do not think that he had developed a real foreign policy with any depth into it. He ran it too much as he ran the domestic side. Everything was an ad hoc situation. Maybe that would have been difficult at this time because we are still working towards what this new world means. I think that I could still find in the foreign service, in helping to develop something like that, a very fascinating career. I would hope that there would be a return to that, that this is a career you could spend your life and make a commitment rather than as you indicated there has been a turn from that. People are led to believe it is a short term thing and they also themselves make it short term. I think that we are the losers for it. That is what I would like to conclude on. I also say one final thing. I think that the labor part of it was an important part because they were the ones who played such a crucial role in Europe in the post-war, in the choice they ultimately made, whether they would go for a free democracy type of life or whether they would adopt the communist system. Fortunately though, I think the communist system condemned itself, and it made the choice easier. I think the history is still to be written. Not to be written, there is no question, it hasn't been written, it is to be written, of the role of the trade union of unionism not only in the cold war but in leading us on to where we are now. So I thank you for the chance to relive many of these thoughts and to think them over again. It has been a blessing for me, and I appreciate the time and your patience.

*Q: It has been a pleasure. I would like to go into some of your activities since your retirement and build on your experience.*

BYRNE: When I left the foreign service it would really be in the early 80's, the late 70's and into the early 80's, we did form a group in which we had an international consultancy firm.

*End of interview*