

John Brandl

- Youth and education 1-
 - St. John's College 1-2
 - Graduate school at Harvard, 1959 2
 - Office of Department of Defense, 1963 3
 - McNamara, Robert 3
 - administrative process 4
- Brandl comes to University of Minnesota to set up School of Public Affairs, 1969-76 5
 - national trend 5
 - economics over political science 6
 - faculty with applied experience 7
 - political economy 7
 - cross-disciplinary staff 9
 - Abrahamson, Dean 9
- Minnesota House and Senate, 1976-1988 10
 - loss in 1978 13
 - shift in legislative control from rural Republicans 15
 - University of Minnesota - just one more interest group 15
 - competition of state university system 15
- University of Minnesota's legislative lobbying 16-
 - University of Minnesota - special 22
- Brandl takes government experience into classroom 22
- Student aid 23
- Students in Public Affairs 24
 - men and women 24-25
- Teaching in Poland 26
- Faculty morale at risk 26-27
- Melancholy of the professoriate 27
 - public loss of respect in University of Minnesota 27
 - slow national economic growth, circa 1975-95 28
- Specialization in the academy 29
 - loss of a shared mission 29
 - loss in all of American life 30
 - place of religion 31
 - problem of community 32
- Brandl's own anomalous position 33
- Community committees 35

Interview with John Brandl

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on October 6, 1994
University of Minnesota Campus**

John Brandl - JB
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: I'm doing an interview this afternoon which is Thursday, October 6, with John Brandl of the School of Public Affairs, now the Humphrey Institute. He's been an esteemed member of the university community for many years and was in the state legislature and state senate, for almost nine or ten years total . . . John?

JB: Eight years in the House and four years in the Senate.

CAC: So, that gives us the opportunity talk down the line, not at once, about your perception of how the legislature perceived the university. [laughter] Oh! we've got a big agenda so we'll get right into it. As I was suggesting, when we start it's often useful just to start with a little intellectual, academic autobiography: how you happened to get interested in politics and public affairs, why the applied part of it, why you chose to go to the school you did, what turned you on, was there some great professor, was it the field itself? The field is yours.

JB: I grew up in St. Cloud and I went to St. John's to college just because I was living in a small world and the choices were very few. I went to Cathedral High School—Benedictines operated that high school—and people just took it for granted, I guess, that I was going to go to St. John's.

CAC: Your family did, too?

JB: I don't come from an educated family. They knew that they wanted me to get educated but they weren't quite sure what that meant or where I should go but St. John's sounded right; so, I went to St. John's. I just took oodles and oodles of courses and fell into majoring in economics largely because in my junior year, I woke up one day and realized if I'm going to graduate next

year, I'm going to have to major in something and I looked around and noticed that I could get in enough courses in economics to major in economics. Along the way, I had found mathematics very interesting but that was too late; I hadn't taken much mathematics in high school. So, I majored in economics. My mentor there, a wonderful old monk—he wasn't old then; he died just a year or two ago—had a Ph.D. from Harvard and he just thought I ought to go to graduate school at Harvard; so, that's what I did. [laughter] I went to Harvard to graduate school in economics.

CAC: Often those chances have dictated what many of us have done.

JB: Yes.

CAC: Did you ever think how lucky—this is my perception—you were to be with the Benedictines, for example, rather than the Jesuits?

JB: [laughter] Oh, yes. I guess I'm very much aware of that!

CAC: [laughter]

JB: And over the years, I've always been grateful to the Benedictines. In fact, they gave me money to go to graduate school.

CAC: Heavens.

JB: It was their idea. I didn't even apply for it. I didn't ask for it. It never occurred to me that they would do such a thing. They knew that I didn't come from . . . I have five younger brothers and sisters. By the time I was a senior in college, I had a brother and a sister in college and three younger ones at home. My folks didn't have any money. The Benedictines gave me some money to go to graduate school, hoping that I would come back and teach at some point and I did ultimately.

CAC: That kind of generosity is typical of the Benedictine order, is it not?

JB: I think so. St. John's is like home for me . . . I once lost an election and the next morning, I got up and drove up to St. John's. In graduate school, I studied economics and I concentrated in mathematical economics and econometrics, very arcane, esoteric work. In fact, my class in graduate school there was the first that was permitted to offer econometrics as a sub-field. That was a little conservative or late on their part.

CAC: This is approximately what years?

JB: I started graduate school in 1959.

CAC: Okay.

JB: By the time I had been there for a few years, I was doing econometrics and international trade theory, both of these very arcane subjects. Then, something happened that did change my life forever! I had taken ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] in college, which meant that I had a military obligation. In the winter of 1963, I got a letter from the army that said that I would appear at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, on such and such a day, which was several months before I was going to finish my Ph.D. thesis. [laughter]

CAC: Were you married at that time?

JB: Yes, I was and we had one child by that time. A friend of mine, who was an assistant professor in the Economics Department there, was a friend of the man who at that time was chief "whiz kid" in [Robert] McNamara's Pentagon and he introduced us. He told his friend that here I was about to be pushed into the army; so, to make a long story short, McNamara just appointed me to his office instead of going in the army and said, "Wait until you finish your Ph.D. thesis," which I did. So, in the summer of 1963, we packed up and moved to Washington and I went to work in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

CAC: But not in the army?

JB: Yes and no. I was technically a first lieutenant; although, I was really instructed not to wear a uniform and to be Dr. Brandl rather than Lieutenant Brandl because it was so infuriating to senior military officers to have lieutenants around with real responsibilities. [laughter] So, I almost never wore a uniform. I don't think I ever did in the Pentagon.

CAC: Your salary and perks were army?

JB: Were army, that's right . . . for a couple years . . . I stayed on briefly in a civilian job but it was the same job. That changed my life because that was the most interesting collection of people I've ever been with in my life and I think they were at least as smart as the people I was with at Harvard but more interesting . . . starting with McNamara, Allen Entoven . . .

CAC: You got to work with McNamara directly?

JB: Yes.

CAC: Wowzer!

JB: A very able man, decisive and he actually kept track of the number of major decisions. I remember when he had made, by his count, 300 and some decisions. He was a little odd that way.

CAC: [laughter]

JB: He organized the place to push decisions to him; so, our function was often to analyze questions out there and then make recommendations to him. He used to like to work, not face to face, but through paper because you could operate more efficiently . . . whether we're going to close this base, or add this weapon system, or take away this weapon system, whatever, he'd have a form and you'd have responsibility for laying out the pros and cons and then giving him a recommendation on the thing of what you thought he ought to do. I did a lot of that sort of thing.

CAC: You were there late [President John F.] Kennedy or early [President Lyndon B.] Johnson?

JB: When I went there in the summer of 1963, John Kennedy was president of the United States.

CAC: You had to go through that trauma?

JB: Yes, that's right. McNamara was still the liberals' darling. That was pre-Vietnam and what changed my life then, as I say . . . that was a time when in Washington it was thought that the quantitative social sciences, especially economics, were relevant to making public policy and that's what I was doing. That's what changed my life. Ever since then, I've been going back and forth between government and universities. I had not studied public finance at all, either as an undergraduate or a graduate student but that's what I became interested in over time . . . cost benefit analysis, evaluation, in general applying the social sciences to public policy questions. I taught some econometrics for a few years but I basically drifted away from that and, similarly, I haven't taught international trade theory for decades.

CAC: How does one carve out a speciality, or several specialities within public affairs? You bring to it your profession training as an economist and your practical work in government. What courses . . . how do you [unclear].

JB: I came here six years after I left Harvard . . . Can I come to that in a moment?

CAC: Oh, sure.

JB: In that period, I spent a couple years in the Pentagon, stayed out briefly at a civilian job, went back to St. John's and taught for a couple years . . .

CAC: Oh!

JB: . . . realized that we didn't want to live in central Minnesota. I still have very strong ties to that place; so, I didn't leave out of any bitterness but we just thought that we didn't want to be there. I went to the University of Wisconsin for a short time, in Madison. Then, I went back to Washington at the end of the Johnson Administration in a sub-cabinet job responsible for

education planning, and evaluation, and budgeting in what was then the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare [HEW]. It was from there that I came to Minnesota to set up the School of Public Affairs. Minnesota had had a Public Administration Center which had been part of the Political Science Department going back to the mid 1930s. It was one of the country's first Public Administration Centers.

CAC: Heavens.

JB: A man name Lloyd Short, a professor in the Political Science Department, had been the director of it. But there was both in Minnesota and across the country a sense by the mid to late 1960s that the field of public administration had fallen on hard times, that it was a backward sub-field of political science, that it wasn't as methodologically as sophisticated as other parts of political science.

CAC: And not fully credited by the academy?

JB: Yes, that's right. That was independent of this other development that there was a sense in the academy—and certainly in government—that a number of the other academic fields, especially economics, were of usefulness for public policy. Almost simultaneously, Minnesota, Harvard, Michigan, Carnegie Mellon, Berkeley, Duke started public . . .

CAC: [unclear] divorce?

JB: Yes, that's right . . . set up public policy schools in the late 1960s, early 1970s, and we had an informal confederation of people who were doing this. I was seeing and talking with people who were setting up these schools at the other places.

CAC: I see and you met them in conference?

JB: Yes. We ultimately set up an organization. We have a professional organization which was formally organized in 1979 but prior to that for a number of years, we met informally at various conferences that we would set up. Somebody would get a grant from someplace. We'd get together and we'd talk about what should be the curriculum of this place—to get to your question.

CAC: This was a small enough universe that most of you could know each other?

JB: Oh, yes. That was definitely the case. It was eight, ten, a dozen, maybe fifteen, schools and each of them was quite small. Yes, we were regularly in contact with each other.

CAC: You're total universe would be 100 faculty, plus or minus?

JB: Yes, that's right.

CAC: And of leaders, smaller than that?

JB: Now, this organization has maybe 600 or 800 members, most of them in academia but many of them in government as well. Later on, I became president of that organization, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management. To answer your question . . . these schools came up with quite similar curricula because we were talking to each other and copying each other.

CAC: You'd had [unclear] similar training?

JB: That's right, that's right. Very many of us were economists and had spent time . . .

CAC: More than political scientists?

JB: More than political scientists. Economics is easier to apply. You can go around saying, "The world consists of constrained maximization problems" or "opportunities to introduce competition" and construe just oodles of questions like that.

CAC: [laughter]

JB: And so we did . . . in, I suppose, a more or less simple-minded way. Each of these schools then had a curriculum that was composed of a sequence in economics, and a sequence in applied statistics, and a sequence of high-class civics.

CAC: What do you mean by high-class civics?

JB: The policy process. How does the policy process work? . . . and typically taught by political scientists.

CAC: Okay.

JB: So, you had some economists, some statisticians, some political scientists in all of these schools. There were variations on that. Some of the schools were more quantitative than others but what I just described was true of this place. We immediately set up a required three sequences.

CAC: But you were [unclear] to make this separation?

JB: To do that, that's right. I was claiming, along with people I was working with in Washington, that we were using contemporary quantitative social science, especially economics in relevant ways and here was the University of Minnesota, like other universities, figuring . . . well, maybe we can be both au courant, that is intellectually, and useful besides. That's how I came to be hired here; and I immediately put into place a curriculum of that kind and set about

hiring economists, and political scientists, and also bureaucrats, people with experience in government. I've always thought that it was important in the School of Public Affairs that there be people with experience.

CAC: The latter came as adjunct part time or were they full time core faculty?

JB: Both.

CAC: Okay. Did you use adjunct faculty?

JB: Yes, we've always had them.

CAC: Probably to a larger extent than most programs?

JB: Yes. People who didn't have academic credentials would be full time and would be here for an extended period of time . . . we'd figure out some way to do that but wouldn't have tenure necessarily. That's the way we operated.

CAC: The expectations of research and publication would be different, I'm guessing?

JB: Yes, that's right and that's a continuing tension in the place. We just had a meeting yesterday to decide, Should we offer tenure to a certain person who might be coming to the university? That's the kind of question that came up with some people saying, "It's obvious that this guy's research is not fancy enough." In fact, the concerns were along the lines of what was my field, econometrics. I'm very aware of the inadequacies of this guy's work. On the other hand, he's an academic entrepreneur. He's a master at translating research into *English* and so it was a disputed question. I don't know how the vote came out; it's very close. That's very common that we have that kind of a dispute in our place.

CAC: Even with Walter Heller in Economics, it was always a little bit questioned because he was able to explain things to dummies . . . [laughter]

JB: That's right. That's right.

CAC: . . . without talking down to them.

JB: Herb Mohring, in Economics, wrote a letter about this man we were considering yesterday and invoked Walter Heller's name because Walter was a superb teacher and by the time he died, technically he wasn't the equal of other people in the department; but he had a fine mind and he was the best person of his generation, I think, at being a political economist, at being both a politician and an economist; so, he was something of a model for me in that regard.

CAC: Well, he taught two presidents.

JB: Yes, that's right! He did.

CAC: When you came here, you inherited some staff that were already going to be split off from Political Science for Public Affairs?

JB: That's right.

CAC: Then, you had a green light to hire new persons to make this a real school?

JB: There were maybe a dozen or so people teaching here at the time I came.

CAC: That many?

JB: Two people had tenure and everybody else, I—one way or another—eased out. I think among some people when I came, people who were there, I was perceived as being hard-nosed, maybe even mean-spirited, but that was what I saw as my job was to start a different kind of place.

CAC: George Warp was one of those with tenure?

JB: George Warp and Jim Jernberg . . . although Jim, I think, has had a very productive time as a master teacher and as an organizer of the teaching of the place. He was director of graduate studies for many, many years and performing this in admirable fashion. That's what I did when I came here.

CAC: To whom did you report?

JB: "Easy." [E.W. Ziebarth]

CAC: It was still within the Arts college?

JB: He was in the CLA [College of Liberal Arts], that's right.

CAC: It's not until the Humphrey [Institute] that you become more autonomous?

JB: That's right. I directed the place for seven years, from 1969 to 1976. I should say something else about that. I tried to get some of the country's very best applied economists, applied social scientists. I'll mention some names here which some people will recognize . . . you might recognize some of them. Manser Olson, for example, who the Economics Department was not interested in giving an appointment to even though he's had immense influence in political science. Political scientists would have been eager to have him come. Manser came. He wanted some kind of affiliation with Economics. They wouldn't do it. He wouldn't take an appointment here; so, he didn't come. Similarly, a man named Bill Nascannon—who is now the

chairman of the Cato Institute; he was a member of the Council of Economic Advisers—they wouldn't give him an appointment either. He ended up going to Berkeley. I can mention a number of people like that and I was unsuccessful then in hiring a number of what I thought to be the very best people in America and I changed my tactic. I then started hiring people who were brilliant but offbeat who didn't fit in any discipline and that created long term problems for the Humphrey Institute.

CAC: They were offbeat because they were cross-disciplinary?

JB: Yes. They were cross-disciplinary or maybe even non-academic. I don't know if I would do that if I were to do it over again because it created a place that lacked coherence. The coherence came from a kind of cheerleading function on the part of the dean or the director. It also meant that people in the academy were going to look askance at such a place. They didn't recognize the people who were in the Humphrey Institute as belonging to them. In some cases, I could just go and spout mathematics at people to just show that I could keep up and I did that sometimes just to embarrass people. Over the years, I too, drifted away from what had been my original discipline, especially once I became a politician. So, I hired offbeat people. Dean Abrahamson had tenure in Anatomy and was a Ph.D. anatomist and a medical doctor and was uncomfortable over there but he became interested in environmental policy. We brought him over and a friend of his named Don Geesaman, who is still, I think, the most formidable intellect in the Humphrey Institute even now. He was a biologist and had been very influential in the nuclear power questions at Lawrence Livermore Lab out in California, not really an academic. I hired such people having, as I said, not been able to attract people with more standard academic credentials. I just thought, and think, that brains are important.

CAC: The same division would be taking place elsewhere, where these schools are being set up and they faced the same range of skepticism by the academy?

JB: They made different choices. At Harvard, for example, Dick Neustadt, a political scientist, was the first dean there and the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard would not let the Kennedy School make its own appointments. They could not offer tenure, for example. They had to get their faculty from the regular departments of the university and it was only in recent years, maybe in the 1980s, that they were able to start making their own appointments. At any rate, for the first ten, fifteen years of their existence, they weren't able to. Aaron Ladovsky—who was my friend and I miss him; he died a year ago—was the first dean at Berkeley. They were small and there they took a different tactic. Their people did not have appointments in the departments. They made their own appointments. I remember talking with him about this. He said he wanted to hire more or less standard academicians who had an interest in public policy but he thought, let's construe this whole field of public policy analysis in ways that are encompassed by the recognized academic disciplines. I wanted it to be a little broader than that. I wanted hunches and experience to be more a part of it. His was a more conservative and a less risky and, ultimately maybe, a more productive—I don't know—way of perceiving this. Nascannon went there. I tried to get Nascannon . . . he went there to Berkeley. So, he had

people who were very good and all of them had recognized standard academic credentials. I was looser about that. I was sloppier about that. I was looking for a combination of brains, especially brains, and desire to apply work in . . .

CAC: And experience?

JB: Yes, experience and eagerness to continue to be out there dealing in some way with the world of affairs, not only to be in the academy; so, I always thought of public affairs as being not quite of the academy and not quite of the world of affairs outside.

CAC: Well, it's a bridge.

JB: Yes, it's something of a bridge. I don't know whether that's the right way to perceive it or not. That's the way I did perceive it.

CAC: You're describing this school before it became the Humphrey Institute?

JB: Yes, that's right.

CAC: Then, it enters another level of funding so then it [unclear].

JB: A different stage.

CAC: You may not want to come to that directly?

JB: Yes, I think that's fine. From 1969 to 1976, I was the director of this school and I was successful in recruiting some very good people. Davis Bobrow came. He left and became a dean at Maryland and now at Pitt[sburgh]. Ted Marmor came. He left to go to Chicago and now he's at Yale. I missed them a lot, especially Ted, when they left us. There were some younger people, too, who came and have since left. In 1976, I ran for the legislature. I gave up the administrative job I had here as director of the School of Public Affairs, kept my professorship, and for a dozen years after 1976 was about half time at the legislature and half time at the university. It varied by quarter. In the spring quarter, I wouldn't teach because the legislature was in session and so on.

CAC: One can think of other examples . . . Arnold Rose and Al Spear.

JB: Yes.

CAC: There aren't many, are there?

JB: No. I think that's about it. Phyllis Kahn had had an affiliation with the university twenty years ago.

CAC: She separated herself.

JB: That's right. She hasn't had any affiliation . . .

CAC: But you were able to maintain this half time foot in the school?

JB: Yes. I found that invigorating. I think that my work in each place was better for my being in the other.

CAC: Your students must have found it more invigorating?

JB: Yes, sure! I could get by with telling them just about anything. They figured he must know, he's over there. [laughter]

CAC: What led you to run for elective office? So often public affairs folks are appointed to under secretary of *Zip*.

JB: Yes. I had had an appointment like that. I had been deputy assistant secretary at HEW. There were two or three reasons. For a long time, I had something like a wanderlust. My wife and I bounced around a lot. By the middle 1970s, she was a graduate student here at the university, and we had three children; and it would not have been right for me to say, "Let's up and leave again." I didn't suggest it. I turned down suggestions or offers to go elsewhere. So, that's one thing . . . I thought it was time to do something else.

CAC: What was your wife studying?

JB: Psychology. She's a child psychologist. There's an intellectual reason that's relevant here for running for the legislature. One of the reasons for running was just that I had been so much influenced by that heady time in Washington. I went there, as we were saying before, when John Kennedy was president. Starting with the time that I spent in the Pentagon and later when I was at HEW, I had great responsibilities but I hadn't been elected by anybody. I had been appointed . . .

CAC: I understand.

JB: . . . to a job out there and I increasingly, over the years, came to believe that part of America's disaffection with government came about because of the growth of the executive branch of the government and that the legislative branch—I suppose it's immodest to say that I would strengthen the legislative branch—needed tending.

CAC: [unclear] to it.

JB: Yes. So, that was very much a part of my deciding to run for the legislature—in fact, over the years that concern has developed in my writing and the book that I’m writing now is a critique of bureaus, of bureaucracy; it’s a critique of the executive branch of government in America—both because of my years in the legislature and also because of some developments in contemporary economics, applying economics to the operation of governmental agencies, but then going way back to my first experience in government when it wasn’t right that a kid there in the Office of the Secretary should have the kind of power that I had.

CAC: Ah.

JB: I could on the one hand be drawn to it, find it heady, be subject to it. David Halberstam called it the *hubris* in his book, *The Best and the Brightest* . . .

CAC: Right.

JB: . . . but still, over time, come to see that as unhealthy and improper. So, that all contributed to my running for the legislature.

CAC: You must have been active in your precinct to get nominated and go through all the ground work to do that?

JB: Yes, I had. I’m a Democrat by blood. I knew the people in my precinct and in my ward and helped on campaigns and so on.

CAC: For the listener, we should say what your precinct was, what your district was.

JB: South Minneapolis, bordering on Edina and Richfield, Minnehaha Creek . . .

CAC: You would describe that neighborhood as what kind of a neighborhood?

JB: Republican . . . when I just started running. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] Affluent?

JB: Comfortable.

CAC: Business and professional?

JB: Yes, business, professional, a comfortable, affluent district.

CAC: Good schools?

JB: Yes, especially when I first ran in 1976. Up until that time, almost all of the politicians down there were Republicans but demographically that area, like the rest of the city, has changed a lot, and so it's a Democratic district now.

CAC: It was [unclear] to be or did you make it by your person?

JB: No, no, no, not by my person. It was just the demography of the *white flight* that's occurred in . . .

CAC: Oh. So, who was coming in as they fled, going back to 1976? That's eighteen years ago.

JB: It's a little more complicated than that. It's that the people who lived down there came to be the kind of people who say, "I am a good person. I live in the city. I could live out in the suburbs but I've chosen to live in the city." Those are Democrats. Republicans don't do that. I think what happened, starting in the mid 1970s, say about the time that the Field [4645 4th Avenue South] and Hale [1220 East 54th Street] schools were paired, was the time that Republicans moved out and that district then just became more of a Democratic district over time.

CAC: You knew that at the time?

JB: No, I didn't recognize it at the time.

CAC: Okay. But you must have studied voting returns so you could . . .

JB: I knew I had a chance, and the incumbent legislator was a Democrat, and a friend of mine, a member of the House. He decided to run for the Senate, which meant there was an empty House seat; so, I ran for that seat. I won that year, in 1976 . . . lost in 1978, and then in 1980 beat the guy who I'd lost to in 1978, and then stayed in the legislature for another ten years.

CAC: That sounds like Mr. [Bill] Clinton.

JB: [laughter] I suppose.

CAC: You learn from your defeat, what sir?

JB: One of the things I learned from my defeat is that there are worse things than losing an election, that life is too short to just be concerned to hang onto office. Try to do what you think ought to be done . . . that's something I learned. Another thing happened to me though. I think I became less cocky—unfortunately [laughter]. Chastened . . . I was chastened by losing.

CAC: Sure.

JB: I have a sense of having a charmed life, and I have had a charmed life, and that was one of the very few great blows to me in my life. It is not fun to lose an election.

CAC: But you thought that you had served your constituents well in your first term?

JB: Yes, I thought I had. Actually, the day before my endorsing convention, I had stood up on the floor of the House and argued for medical assistance funding for abortions.

CAC: That was a hard position for a Catholic.

JB: Yes, it was. More than just about anything else that I've ever done that continues to trouble me. Because I basically had a pro-choice voting record in the legislature. It continues to trouble me. I'm more and more uncomfortable about my own decision. This is getting us away from the university though.

CAC: Oh, no. I think the careers that people have in and out . . . there are all kinds of folks that do this. They don't all run for the legislature but they do things . . . they come in and out. Go ahead. This is engaging.

JB: I very much have appreciated the University of Minnesota's willingness to accept this kind of life that I was living. I never got any kind of static for that. There are some parts of this country where it's against the law for a professor to be a member of the legislature. I never served on the Education Committees in the legislature. In some ways, I would have been a better legislator for the university if I hadn't been a professor at the university. I didn't seek or accept committee responsibilities having to do with education, which maybe is a little precious of me because most people . . . farmers look to be on the agriculture committee and so on.

CAC: Ahhh.

JB: But anyway, that's the position that I took over there.

CAC: Bravo. What committees did you seek then?

JB: After my first term . . . freshman legislators don't get money committees . . . but after that I was on taxes, health and human services because I'd had some background in that, agriculture after awhile. At the time I left the legislature, I was the only metropolitan legislator on the Agriculture Committee.

CAC: Can you say something about what you learned the twelve years you were there of how the legislature viewed the university, even though you were not on the Education Committee?

JB: I do have something to say about that. I think that the single biggest thing that's happened for the university in that regard over the period of the last generation or two is that the legislature

swung from being dominated by successful, established, rural conservatives—Republicans—to . . . in the early 1970s, suddenly the Democrats took charge. By and large the legislature, after that time, came to be controlled by . . .

CAC: But that was redistricting that did that primarily?

JB: Oh, sure. Right, the big redistricting decision of the Supreme Court in the 1960s. The legislature for the last twenty some years has been controlled by younger, often ill-educated, liberal Democrats for whom the university is one more interest group; whereas, the university was almost alone among important things that the state of Minnesota *ought to do* previously. It was held in a special regard by those, as I say, more established and conservative rural Republican legislators who had dominated the legislature prior to the early 1970s.

CAC: Who had a sense of pride and ownership in the university as a state institution?

JB: Yes, that's right. On top of that, the Democrats—since egalitarianism is the ideology of Democratic politicians—were bound to see an institution such as this which is inherently elitist, or ought to be . . . were bound to look at it askance. This is a place that has—at least in its graduate schools—admissions criteria. It doesn't have open enrollment. It shouldn't have open enrollment in my view. So, this combination of the university becoming just one more interest group together with this anti-elitist sentiment among the Democratic politicians, together with our moving into, after the 1970s, a long term fiscal problem—that we haven't seen the worst of yet, I think—has meant that inevitably the university was going to be at a disadvantage in the legislature compared with its situation in the past. I think that's going to continue.

CAC: Do you have a sense of the competing interest of greater Minnesota legislators to their own state university or community college?

JB: Oh, yes.

CAC: How does that play into this equation?

JB: Up until the last couple of decades, Minnesotans thought they had one university, one public university, and then a number of smaller colleges. Over the course of that twenty-year period, those teachers colleges were renamed colleges, and then those colleges were renamed universities, and now the legislators from St. Cloud, and from Moorhead, and from Bemidji, and Mankato, and Winona want to know why they don't get the same amount of money for their university as the University of Minnesota gets. So, the University of Minnesota has lost this place that it had in the minds of legislators.

CAC: So, all these things happen at the same time, in the early, mid 1970s?

JB: Yes. In the 1970s.

CAC: It begins to pick up?

JB: That's right. It began to happen when the Democrats took control in the 1970s and it became more clear though in the 1980s when the budget problems really hit. It was in the 1970s when we had an unindexed income tax and inflation—and a little bit of economic growth in a way— so, automatically money was rolling into the state government; but by the 1980s when we indexed the income tax—inflation stopped anyway—it was clear the economy had settled in to a slower growth rate than had been the case after the war for the first twenty years or so. These things then all came together. My view is that the difficulties that the university has with the legislature will continue but that they're also not the responsibility of some person. They're caused by these forces that we just talked about.

CAC: Systemic.

JB: Yes.

CAC: You were in the legislature during an era that [Peter] Magrath was president and Stan Kegler was the chief lobbyist?

JB: Yes, and before him, Stan Wenberg.

CAC: Yes. You didn't survive on into early [Ken] Keller?

JB: Oh, yes, sure.

CAC: Oh, you did?

JB: Oh, sure. Keller was president in the . . . In fact, [Nils] Hasselmo was president when I left the legislature.

CAC: Oh, I see. Well, can you say something comparatively about the skill of presenting the university's case if you have Magrath, Keller, and Hasselmo is very recent, and Wenberg and Kegler?

JB: When I first went to the legislature, Stan Wenberg and later Kegler were able to do their work with a handful of legislators. When I first went to the legislature, the legislature was a more closed enterprise and a more centralized enterprise than it is now. It's less and less possible for the legislature to hold private hearings. There always are some things that are decided in private—and I was part of that—but there's less and less of that that's happening. The university has to deal with a lot more legislators now than was the case twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago. That's one point I would make. I have an image in my mind of Nils Hasselmo standing outside

the Senate chambers in what would have been, I suppose, 1989 or 1990, the last night of the session when we walked out at midnight or one o'clock in the morning. He was standing out there to thank us. Members were very impressed at that. It was a kind of humble act on his part. Members were impressed that the president of the University of Minnesota would be there after the decisions were all made to thank us. That was a sign of the sort of things I've been talking about. It's a different place. Previously, the president and the lobbyists would deal with the speaker, and the majority leader, and maybe the chairs of the education committees but now it has to be done more retail fashion. In that regard, Nils is just by nature a more appropriate person to do this kind of work than, say, [Malcolm] Mac Moos. Keller's problem in the legislature was similar to his problems here or maybe it was because Keller tended to be perceived over there as aloof and arrogant. I don't say that he was aloof and arrogant. He was a very, very able man . . . I think the most able of the people who was president during these decades. There was an insensitivity about him to the perception of things that he would do . . . the desk, and the kitchen, and so on, those things. It was an insensitivity . . . that in Minnesota, it would be hard to pull those things off and ultimately that brought him down.

CAC: You deliberately stayed off the committees. Did members on the committee ever know that you were on the faculty and would consult with you?

JB: Oh, of course. Oh, sure.

CAC: What was that conversation? Can you say something about how they perceive the university over time? They must have been checking out with you the validity of what was being told them by others representing the university?

JB: Yes, people would do that. Sometimes people wouldn't do it though thinking that I could only be expected to be, say, a reflection or a mouthpiece of the administration, not understanding that I wasn't. [laughter] Nothing else comes to mind about the members' perception of the university other than what I've just been describing.

CAC: How about the independent authority—as I've heard from others but historians always check out; they want to get five independent witnesses to the same fact—that the Health Sciences and the Agricultural College had their own access that was . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

JB: . . . by that time, one other person and I, John Tomlinson and I, were on two of the big money committees. We were the only two people in the House, I think, who were on two of the money committees. We both were on school aid, that is, elementary and secondary education, and taxes. The new Republican speaker made it clear that we were not going to be able to continue to have two money committees. We could have one, each of us, but we weren't going

to be on two; so, What would we be interested in doing? I told him, "I'm an economist and agriculture's got something to do with economics. I'd go on agriculture." My father, would get these periodicals, these publications from the legislature, called me up late one night and said, "John! It says here you're on the Agriculture Committee!" I said, "Yes, that's right." He said, "It must be a stunt of that new Republican speaker you got down there. He must have put you on that."

CAC: [laughter]

JB: I said, "No, Dad, I asked for it." He laughed and laughed. He said, "You don't know anything about agriculture!" [laughter] Anyway, I went on agriculture. As I said, I had started out in international trade and agriculture is important in international trade.

CAC: You bet.

JB: I was representing an entirely urban district, south Minneapolis. The only agricultural land I had was Bachman's in my district. I think part of that Bachman's enterprise down there is for tax purposes agricultural land . . . it was in my district. I went on agriculture and, as I say, it tends to be rural people on the Agriculture Committee. In Minnesota, agriculture more than any other field looks out for itself in an unreflective way, in an unselfconscious way. Farmers will stand up on the floor of the House, and sing the praises of cows, and explain how it's important that we give money to people who raise cows in a way that if I were to stand up and say, "Think about it, how important it is for us to give faculty salary increases," people would think I'd gone bonkers and I'd be left out.

CAC: [laughter]

JB: But we don't do that with farmers. The farmers to this day are able, and certainly willing, to speak in their own self interest in the legislature . . .

CAC: Perhaps, we can thank Mr. Jefferson for that.

JB: [laughter] I suppose that's right. One day, I was sitting next to a friend of mine on the Agriculture Committee and I leaned over to him and I said that my great grandparents had been farmers. My grandfather, I remember, didn't want to be a farmer. He moved into a small town of 150 people; that's where my father was raised. I grew up in St. Cloud but then had moved to Minneapolis. I asked him, "Does that reflect a moral regression on the part of the Brandls?" [laughter] But he has on occasion since then reminded me that I had made that point to him and that it was a revelation to him, the realization that he had been carrying that notion around, that yes! that God intended people to live on the farms.

CAC: You bet . . . the chosen of the earth.

JB: After I lost that election in 1978, I was determined not to lose anymore elections; so, thereafter I ran very technically sophisticated campaigns—I'm not changing the subject as you'll see in a minute—lots of polls and surveys, and targeting the voters, and finding out who was for me, and who was against me, and especially the undecided people . . . what they're interested in and then communicating with them. I remember one time in the 1980s, we did a random sample poll of the district finding out what was on people's minds and then we asked people about agriculture. What should we do about agriculture? Those were hard times for the farmers. I was intrigued and really charmed in a way to see that the people in this district of mine, this urban district of mine, wanted us to help the farmers. That's partly Minnesota generosity, and it's partly nostalgia, and it helps explain why agriculture is able to be disproportionately influential even to this day in Minnesota. We still have twice as many farmers in Minnesota as the national average but they're a tiny part of the population.

CAC: Yes.

JB: They nevertheless think that they are in some sense . . .

CAC: Special.

JB: . . . special. Yes, that's right.

CAC: Did Bill Hueg come to your committee to testify about the university or about agri-business?

JB: Yes.

CAC: Was he perceived as a spokesperson for the university or as a spokesperson for agriculture?

JB: I think he was a spokesperson for agriculture.

CAC: And agri-business?

JB: Yes, and agri-business but agriculture. I think that the Ag School has always been good at speaking their language to folks. The whole extension idea, I think, permeates at that place and I think they have been very good—the agriculture part of the university—at conveying the sense in the legislature that they were the friends of farmers so that you had members of the legislature carrying the water of the Ag School in a way that you just did not have people doing for the rest of the campus.

CAC: You see, the same thing is said by some about the health sciences.

JB: Yes. I do know that that's said. I just don't have the personal recollection of that.

CAC: I don't want you to testify to something you don't know.

JB: An earlier point . . . we were talking earlier about how the legislators from Duluth watch out for UM-D [University of Minnesota-Duluth] . The legislators from Bemidji watch out for Bemidji and so on. The main campus doesn't have legislators like that. The people who are representing this area right here don't necessarily see themselves as looking out for the university.

CAC: In my district, which is John Marty's, he has a disproportionate number of faculty folks who live in his district and vote for him; and we never get excited about his being our representative, that is, for the university.

JB: During the 1980s, the Faculty Association started having gatherings of faculty members in a district with legislators to try to indicate that there's some kind of power there. There's something a little naive about that because getting twenty or thirty people into a room doesn't constitute political power. So, the university has not thrown its weight around in the same way that the teamsters do.

CAC: Ahhh.

JB: It hasn't done that. I want to make another important point about the university in the legislature. I believe that for a number of years now, it's been the case that the leadership of the legislature has carried the university; that is, say, Roger Moe in the Senate and whoever has been speaker—and it will be interesting to see how this works with Irv Anderson—has watched out for the university and has seen to it that the university wasn't terribly harmed. Had it not been for the leadership of the legislature, the university's situation over there would be even worse. That suggests that in the long term the university is in trouble. I don't think that can go on forever that the leadership can protect the university.

CAC: Where do you see Roger Moe coming from in that regard? Why would he make this one priority among others?

JB: I think that Roger has some of that same sense that those Republicans who used to run the state had.

CAC: Okay. In the olden days, Governor Elmer Andersen certainly had it.

JB: Yes, yes. I think Roger believes there is something special about the University of Minnesota.

CAC: Was he an alumnus?

JB: No, he's not.

CAC: Were there others who would be of similar disposition when you were there?

JB: Fred Norton was speaker for a time in the House.

CAC: Ann Wynia?

JB: Ann Wynia. Now, that's a special case though because she was herself a teacher. Her husband was on the faculty here. Yes, Ann's an example of that.

CAC: But there aren't many? You're reaching so it would suggest that there aren't many.

JB: That's right.

CAC: But they are well placed? I mean, if you want a friend, Roger Moe is about the best friend you could have.

JB: That's right. My point is that it's unlikely to go on forever. It means that the general sentiment in the place is not supportive of the university and the wiser senior people have to just step in and say, "Hey, look. That's troubling to me."

CAC: I'm hoping—we are after all self-serving in some degree—that our new vice-president Mel George for outreach from St. Olaf College may be able to cultivate some of that. Do you know him?

JB: I don't know him well but I know him and I admire him.

CAC: He's a remarkable fellow.

JB: Yes.

CAC: I'm going to ask a silly question now only because so many people say it and I need your response or history needs your response. It is often said cynically that what every university needs is a winning team, particularly a football team. Did you ever witness anyone moved by a winning season or a losing season? You've heard it said?

JB: Oh, sure. Yes.

CAC: No one's ever checked that generalization out, you know. There's a hypothesis, a speculation and I am skeptical of it.

JB: I think that if Minnesota had Michigan's football record, it might help. I can't give you evidence of that but I think it could help. It could help give people, the legislators, a sense that

there is something special about this place. They are told there is something special about this place . . .

CAC: But it's hard for them to see, isn't it?

JB: Yes. Actually, to come back to something you asked a couple times about Health Sciences. On more than one occasion, I remember talking with legislators who themselves, or members of their families, were treated in what seemed to them almost miraculous ways in the University Hospital. I don't know to what extent that was orchestrated, to what extent people in the hospital were aware of who they were dealing with . . . I don't know about that but I do know that in the process Health Sciences gained friends. I remember a couple of such conversations. I suppose there are lots of members like that.

CAC: There isn't much that the rest of us can do?

JB: Yes, it's harder. That's right. That comes to mind here. It's linked to that previous point about the specialness. It's been a long time since we've gone to the Rose Bowl. People do believe that there is something special about the University of Minnesota Hospital but they don't know about the rest of the place.

CAC: That's interesting. I don't want to give up on the legislature. Did we hit all the pay dirt now, mine the pay dirt? Let me ask you this. In what specific ways did you carry that experience into the classroom, working. You worked mostly with people seeking a master's degree in Public Affairs?

JB: Yes. The Humphrey Institute offers only a master's degree. We don't teach undergraduates. We don't have a Ph.D. program.

CAC: In what way did that experience enrich the seminars, the courses that you taught?

JB: I'm interested in how ideas influence events and I believe that one of the ways in which ideas influence events is that we come to perceive the world by means of our theories of the world and the more aware we are of the theories that we're carrying around, I think the more able we are to influence that world. I was constantly taking this or that theory over there, and then seeing it work or not work, or be persuasive or not persuasive, and could talk to my students about that. I've just now talked about going both ways . . .

CAC: Yes, yes.

JB: . . . that is, I was taking things from here over there and then wondering Why this is working, or why isn't this persuasive, or what do I have to do make this persuasive? I want to tell a story here that I wanted to tell anyhow but I think I can use it in this regard. Ten years ago, I sponsored legislation which set up what has become the financing system for higher

education in Minnesota, the student aid system. We have a system here in which part of the funding for higher education goes directly to the institution but part of it goes to students on the basis of need. I have believed for some time that more of it should go to students and less to institutions . . . a very, very controversial point both because the economist in me thinks that empowering consumers makes sense and because I believe—I suppose in part because of my own experience at St. John’s—that meeting public purposes through institutions other than public institutions sometimes can make sense. I believe higher education in America is flourishing in part because it isn’t exclusively public; it’s not a monopoly. The diversity of public higher education in America means that there’s a healthy competition and it means that people can find a community, a college or university where they fit. I actually believe that that organizational and funding arrangement is a partial explanation for why higher education is in better shape in America than elementary and secondary. I’ve thought that way for a long time.

I was the main sponsor of legislation in the House to set up the funding system in Minnesota and the way it works is that we give aid on the basis of need to students. In 1983 when we passed this, the budget was tight and we deliberately decided that we would increase tuition and take the money, the appropriation that was released thereby, and put that appropriation into student aid; so that people whose income was below the median income in the state were on net better off, that is, their aid went up by more than their tuition. I believe that’s appropriate exactly because higher education is not universal in America. The public higher education system tends to be regressively redistributed. So, I think that’s an appropriate way of doing things. I’ve had that notion and there’s some interesting research that goes back a couple decades about that. Steve Hoenack here at the university has done some—he’s in the Humphrey Institute—research about what would happen if we raised this tuition and so on; so we had a lot of background research when I carried that legislation. This research was not ultimately the main reason why the legislation passed. I think that the legislation passed for a combination of reasons, which brings me back to my point about How do ideas influence things and how can you package things in order that they will be persuasive? I thought that it was appropriate, not just acceptable but appropriate, fitting, that students would take their aid and go to a private college if they wanted to . . . a very, very controversial point. It was fought bitterly by the unions which had organized the state university system. They believed that no public money should go to such folks.

CAC: Sure.

JB: Ultimately though, we passed the legislation because I was able to show that it would be quite possible that if we did not permit people to use that aid in the private institutions, they would transfer in large enough numbers to the public institutions, that higher education would be more expensive than if we let them go to the private colleges; so, it was kind of a practical point which helped nudge over enough legislators so that this could pass.

CAC: I understand.

JB: I don't know how one generalizes about that other than to say one tries to have not only just some vision but also to base one's work over there on research if you can and then you just look for whatever kinds of arguments that you can come up with to try to persuade people. [laughter]

CAC: Let's come back to the students. We'll get in the Humphrey Institute because that's another order. Public Affairs . . . you're half time . . . you're a legislator . . . over that twelve year period, what kind of students are attracted to a master's degree in Public Affairs, which is really a practice?—it is a professional degree like an MSW in social work. Did it change over time?

JB: It hasn't changed a lot. We get really very able students, remarkably able students. We have 100 graduate students. I know the numbers for the past year. We admitted eighty first year graduate students . . .

CAC: That's a two-year program?

JB: Two-year program . . . the average quantitative GRE [Graduate Record Examination] was 690 which is, I think, very high if you take in that many students. It's down a bit this year when we took in 100 but not an awful lot.

CAC: What was it in 1970, for example, roughly?

JB: I don't know. We had a much smaller operation. We were only taking in twenty-five students a year.

CAC: I see.

JB: On average, I think, the students are better now than they were twenty-five years ago and the Humphrey name has helped a lot in that regard. Students at the Humphrey Institute tend to be people who don't know what they're going to do with themselves, unlike the person who you knew in third grade . . . you knew that person was going to be an engineer, or in ninth grade, or whatever. [laughter] They tend not to know what they're going to do with themselves. They tend also though to be characterized by an idealism, a desire to be of service in some way. They're attractive people.

CAC: And increasingly women as well as men?

JB: This year, 60 percent of the class is women.

CAC: And when would that have started to shift? I'm guessing in 1970.

JB: Probably 1970s to 1980s. We've always been, during the time I've been here, roughly half and half.

CAC: It's not a dramatic shift over the twenty-five year period?

JB: No, I don't think so.

CAC: Okay. The motivation of women and men is pretty much the same?

JB: Yes, although I was talking with my wife about this the other day. I'm teaching a seminar course this quarter that requires me to prod and ask an occasional question and the students to ask . . . I have to work hard at getting the women to be more forward. Now, I suppose that even the women in the class might object to my putting it that way but that's the way I see it. I think there is something about America that still in 1994 that many women find it harder to be forward in class than men do, even by the time they get to graduate school.

CAC: Even if they are moved by this hope of service?

JB: Yes. I want to say another thing about that though. I think that the cynicism in America about government extends even to the people who come to the Humphrey Institute . . .

CAC: Ah.

JB: . . . so that even though they want to be of service, they're also suspicious about government and many of them, not all of them, would like there to be some kind government that's not full of all these politicians. [laughter]

CAC: Will some of them go to the non-profits then?

JB: Oh, yes, yes. In fact, we're starting a not-for-profit, a non-profit, management concentration in the place. People want to do that.

CAC: In environment, for example?

JB: Yes. There's a lot of interest in the environment at the Humphrey Institute.

CAC: Are there jobs to absorb . . . ?

JB: We work hard at placement, put a lot of resources into placement. People ultimately get jobs but it's tough. Government is not a growth industry in America, I don't think. It's not easy to get a job, if they get it.

CAC: You have the environmental folks maybe to open up another market there?

JB: Maybe. One of the concentrations in the place is environment, energy, and so on.

CAC: So, in fact, the institute has to be moved in some part by market considerations, of placement of their graduates, in the kinds of courses that they might offer? If there are jobs in environment then there is a consideration for adding courses in this field?

JB: We're not very deliberate in that regard.

CAC: I see.

JB: Another point about this . . . I've been spending a lot of time in central Europe lately and I've been much influenced by that. In fact, these notions that I have about bureaus and the inefficacy of bureaus, my beliefs about that have only been strengthened by going over there and seeing that they loused things up. They were trying to everything in bureaus, make cars, and ships, and whatnot, and I don't think it worked very well; so, the argument that I've been developing over the years has just been strengthened by my experience over there. I wanted to make another point. I'm teaching now in a new MBA program in Warsaw. It doesn't make any sense for me to be in MBA program—my life has been of government—except they have a required sequence of several courses about government.

CAC: I see.

JB: They want government, public policy, and public management to be part of their sequence for an MBA, which I'm pleased at. What I wanted to say is that the students, except for a group of graduate students at Harvard whom I taught some years ago, these are the best students I've ever had over there in Warsaw. But I still want to make another point about it is that they're cocky! and our students are not cocky anymore. Now, maybe American MBA students are cocky and maybe American medical students or lawyers are cocky, I don't know . . . I don't teach them but our students are not cocky. I think that there's a certain melancholy in America these days that extends to our students; and I recognize it when I see these young Polish kids who are full of conviction that the world is their plum, and that their opportunities are going to be out there, and that they're going to be up to it. Now, this is an extremely selectively program that they have over there but we've got a pretty selective program here, too. It's a sad comment that I'm making about American students these days, I think.

CAC: Does the melancholy affect the faculty here?

JB: I would say to a somewhat lesser extent in general in the American professoriate. The American professoriate, I think, is demoralized. I think that's less true in the Humphrey Institute partly because—I don't know if the faculty gives the dean enough credit—the dean is so successful at raising money, at hustling money. Something like 20 percent of our budget comes from the state of Minnesota. He's hustling money from all over and so the place is growing. I argue with him. I think he'll add just about anything if it adds to the budget of the place and he doesn't like to hear that kind of criticism; although, I think there's something to it. Not withstanding that, the fact that the place is growing bolsters the morale of the faculty of the Humphrey Institute at

a time when in a lot of this university, in big parts of this university, people wonder whether there are going to be students for them. We're actually thinking seriously about teaching undergraduate courses. If we were to offer undergraduate courses, I imagine that lots of parts of the university would say, "Who the hell do you think you are?" . . . people who need students, want students. We don't have that concern in the Humphrey Institute; so, I don't think the morale problems are as bad there as in general.

CAC: This is a nice lead then into that question of—it's a nice phrase—the melancholy of the professoriate. How do you see it evidenced and how do you explain it? Where does it come from? What consequences do you think it's having for the learning and the teaching missions?

JB: I've got an answer but my answer is . . . you're going to ask, How did that happen? [laughter] I think that for many people in academia, they came into academia expecting a certain respect that they're not finding. So, then you ask, Why is America less respectful?

CAC: Or why would they ever have expected a great deal of respect?

JB: [laughter] It may have been that they grew up as the sons and daughters of those people in America decades ago for whom the university was a special place.

CAC: I see.

JB: But it's just one more institution that flawed, as all of American institutions are flawed these days. So, I think that's part of it. Part of it is that America's slow economic growth over the last couple of decades has meant that for lots of people their expectations for being better off, which had been built into them, are being frustrated and that's true in the academy as well as elsewhere. We're better off financially . . .

CAC: But if you look at our salary schedule—I know lots of budgets; although, not the last three or four years because I am emeritus—the faculty of the University of Minnesota on median are the top 5, 10 percent of personal incomes for the state of Minnesota.

JB: Oh, sure.

CAC: But we talk poor.

JB: Yes.

CAC: Is that a matter of the expectation and does that add to the melancholy. I don't understand this. I really don't, you know. I'm not asking leading questions. I just don't understand it.

JB: But everybody's income has been going up slowly. That's part of what I mean. We had an expectation for a couple of decades . . .

CAC: But if you're the top 5 or 10 percent . . . that's not a realistic ground for melancholy!

JB: [laughter] Yes, yes. I told you ahead of time, I was going to be stumped when you asked me, "Why is that?" But I do think that the slow economic growth of America in the last twenty years has contributed to a general frustration, not just in the academy but all over the country.

CAC: The fact that it was that distribution came to be distorted at an accelerated rate in the 1980s and the early 1990s bears on this or not on us?

JB: Oh, sure, I think it bears on us. Don't you think that there's a widespread sense that some people became fabulously and inappropriately wealthy in the 1980s and whoever they were, they weren't professors?

CAC: Yes. I hear that from my colleagues. Sure.

JB: Part of what I'm saying is that the concerns of professors are the concerns of a lot of people in this society, that they aren't peculiarly problems of the academy, except for the fact that the academy is just not held in as high regard as it once was.

CAC: And we know that this university, for reasons we talked about earlier this afternoon, is not held in the esteem that it was, let's say, twenty-five years ago.

JB: Yes, I think that's right. I think the size of this university contributes to that. I think it's hard to feel that one is part of a graspable community of 50,000 people. It's just hard.

CAC: Let me try something else with you—and I know we have other items on our agenda that we really want to address before we're through. I've heard from people in diverse places, different colleges, engineering, education, medical school, arts college, agriculture—I've done about thirty-five interviews—a recurring theme. The last twenty-five years in many disciplines, the trend toward specialization of research and therefore of teaching has fragmented the ground of collegiality, that increasingly people are saying, "I don't feel that I am part of the whole enterprise anymore."

JB: Yes.

CAC: Sometimes, I know clearly because they give illustrations of what happens in their own college, or has happened the last twenty-five years. Can you respond to that sense generally? You talk with lots of faculty outside the Humphrey Institute.

JB: Yes. I'm on the board of regents at St. John's, my alma mater, which is a liberal arts college. One of the differences between a liberal arts college and a university is that faculty members in a college tend to see their colleagues there at the college to be their colleagues, their

peers. Here, our colleagues, our peers, tend to be people in the same speciality, in the same subdivision across the country or the world.

CAC: Ah ha. There you are. So, we identify with our career line nationally rather than the institution?

JB: Yes.

CAC: Some people put it to me, "People aren't loyal!" and they mean loyal to the institution in that regard. It may be just arising out of the changing nature of research, of our disciplines.

JB: Sure, I think that's right.

CAC: You find, for example, at John's as you talk with fellow board members or with the faculty there, now informally, that they still have a sense of a shared mission?

JB: Yes, yes, that's right, certainly by comparison with the great universities in the country such as the University of Minnesota.

CAC: They have the advantage of size and of quality—we are high quality also—but they have the shared religious community as well.

JB: Yes.

CAC: Could you comment on that?

JB: That cuts in several different ways. To some extent the faculty there is subject to dissimilar centrifugal forces of having to perceive themselves as an economist as much as member of the faculty of St. John's, or as a statistician, or whatever. Places like St. John's, a Catholic, Benedictine, liberal arts college have some of the same problems that all American institutions have these days. People are less attached to the church, to the University of Minnesota, to the Benedictine community—their monks are leaving—than was the case in the past. And America hasn't figured out how to move on from there. Do we retreat to a prior time? Do we recreate or invent new communities? Do we simply put up with being autonomous individuals in a world in which we're not bound together in a way that we were bound by those institutions in the past? I'm drawn to spend more and more time up there at St. John's because I think that we cannot survive merely as individuals and that we need those ties of family and religion, sometimes of place. Sometimes, a place like this university can do it but it's harder and harder here. We tend to look out for our own department, our own branch of the university, our own discipline. We tend to see ourselves, as we were just saying . . .

CAC: As an historian rather than an educator?

JB: Yes, yes, that's right. In this book that I'm writing now, I say in the first chapter something which, perhaps, you won't find remarkable but which I was struck by when I thought of it that way. I grew up as a policy analyst. I found myself saying in this book that the book is an exercise in policy synthesis not in policy analysis. Policy analysis tends to take a single discipline, breaking up something into little pieces . . . right. I've been forced by my responsibilities in government to be eclectic or to be respectful of varieties of ways of perceiving the world out there. A student of ours once said that in our School of Public Affairs, we were trying to perceive the world by means of a variety of metaphors. In my discipline of economics, we are not trying to do that. We are trying to perceive the world in economics as consisting of self-interested individuals with fixed preferences bouncing off each other and trying to explain as much as we can that way—in fact, trying to explain everything that way. The disciplines are set up in that fashion. Economists at the University of Minnesota are not searching out people who are trying to—psychologists, neurologists . . . I don't know who else—explain, How do we come to have the preferences we have? Economists aren't doing that. Economists aren't saying, "Is there a power to altruism that can be instrumental even for public policy purposes?" Economists are trying to say, "Can we explain all of the people's actions by the means of their particular perception?" That's just an illustration of the point we've been talking about here.

CAC: Yes.

JB: The departmentalization of learning in America . . .

CAC: And of all other segments life?

JB: Yes.

CAC: We just know ours.

JB: Yes.

CAC: I suspect that the church as a community has more meaning in your life than in the life of many other academic folks?

JB: Yes, I think that's right.

CAC: And what does that say to your role as a learner, and a teacher, and a public servant?

JB: I am struck that questions of religion are not acceptable in the secular academy so that in an odd way, some important questions are more discussible at religious institutions than they are at the great secular universities.

CAC: I think that's possible. Our culture is intensely secular.

JB: Yes. It may be, too, though that I, personally, don't stare at this with enough courage. I don't know how a society persists as its great supporting mediating institutions break down. I don't know how the society survives.

CAC: We spoke earlier of the melancholy of the professoriate and I think that many of the professoriate, at least in the humanities and social sciences—but I find in the exact sciences as well—there's kind of a longing for community, a longing for meaning, a longing for some unifying force; but you can't pump it up artificially.

JB: Yes.

CAC: It has to come from some where but I find an enormous hunger, John, and it's inchoate. You don't find this secular culture then hostile when you come into it as a church person, as a religious person?

JB: No, I don't. It's not hostile. It's indifferent.

CAC: Yes.

JB: It's not personally hostile.

CAC: It means that you can't share?

JB: Yes, although students somehow pick up what's on my mind or what I do, these affiliations of mine, and they'll come to talk to me. They'll want to write a paper on the role of religion in this or that. They'll say sometimes to me how they feel that that part of their lives is not acceptable, is not to be talked about . . . is not to be talked about here. That's unfortunate. I think the University of Iowa has a Religion Department, which is interesting. It's a field of study.

CAC: This gives you a chance working one on one with students to be accepting and nurturing?

JB: Right, but I want to make a point here both about religion and about politics. I have an old-fashioned idea—I have a lot of old-fashioned ideas [laughter]—that I think it's not proper for me to be an evangelist, a preacher, either about my religion or about my politics. I don't see students as some kind of captive audience.

CAC: I appreciate that.

JB: I try to argue, if we get on to, say, policy questions or policy implications—sometimes students will know what my views are—I try to give different sides of the question.

CAC: Sure.

JB: That notion was taken for granted, I think, in the academy a few decades ago and now, there are at least some subfields here, some newer disciplines, where it's thought that one is deluding oneself if one talks like that.

CAC: Yes, that you announce your subjectivity and ride it hard. That in itself, in some disciplines, in some departments, has been divisive along generational lines?

JB: Yes.

CAC: We speak of a melancholy that goes far beyond the academy? But you, like many of us, can't see ways to restore—restore is wrong because that would suggest going back—of creating meaningful communities of the sort that you would wish?

JB: This weekend we're having a gathering at the Humphrey Institute, a forum. One of the people who is coming is a man named Mike Novak, who is a philosopher, a social thinker.

CAC: Yes, I know him.

JB: He is Tocquevillean, with respect to the question that you just raised, that is, one who sees America as a country not only of individuals but also of associations. [Alexis] Tocqueville celebrated this and marveled at the associations that we form here. I think that in some ways, my own political party has contributed to the weakening of . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

JB: I am of government and I'm economist. Economists are inclined to see the world as consisting of autonomous self-interested individuals but I also was raised by Benedictines, by a community of Benedictines. I was just talking about that Tocquevillean argument . . . so my profession is thinking about public policy . . . I think that more and more government ought to look for ways to meet our social responsibilities through whatever associations people come together in and are drawn to, and whatever associations where people come to be concerned about the welfare of each other. The strongest such associations are family and religion and those are weaker than in the past but to some extent they are weaker because government has been indifferent, or hostile, or clumsy in the way it's dealt with them. These several concerns of mine come together in this agenda, this political agenda such as it is, of having government help, assist, work through, whether it's helping families care for loved ones at home rather than in an institution or finding ways to enable people to send their kids to a religious school if that's what they want to do. I think that in the process, we would get better care for those infirm people, we get better education for those kids, and we might also strengthen these institutions as

a by-product. I don't see any other alternative for the society than to have those mediating institutions between the individual on the one hand and the state on the other. I think that is the American way.

CAC: State or society, or corporation, or whatever.

JB: Yes. It's an old-fashioned notion but it's at least an alternative to the kind of government that my party has brought about, the bureaucratization of governmental activities which has been inefficient, ineffective, and I think demoralizing and I think doesn't have much of a future. I disagree with Marx and [unclear] in that regard. We have to find alternatives to those bureaus, and for that matter to those corporations, and to the extent that we can—we, meaning the society through its government if that's where I'm working—meet those responsibilities through those basic institutions.

CAC: How can the university now strengthen its own institution to meet that range of needs?

JB: [pause] Clarke, I don't know the answer to that.

CAC: I ask it in part because I recognize from your writings, and from your career, and from conversations we've had here and there—not as often as I would have liked—that you are a rare synthesis, particularly the last five, ten years, of a person whose commitment in public policy would be conceived of as liberal and in some cases even radical, really looking for new strategies for public institutions to meet private needs, and family needs, and to strengthen them. That on the one hand with what is very clear a more conservative, moral, or religious point of view than the academy generally shares. Most people in the academy aren't used to that kind of synthesis that, whether consciously or naturally, you seem to working along—without resolution yet, hmm?

JB: Yes, that's right, without resolution.

CAC: I don't know how you're perceived by your immediate colleagues, you see . . . I'm sure with admiration and respect for everything you've done . . . but your position is a peculiar one in the academy?

JB: Yes, it's anomalous but in addition to all that, it's anomalous because even though I'm back here 100 percent, there's a sense in which part of my life is outside. I write columns or hang around with politicians and so on; so, in a way the academy is not my whole life.

CAC: Sure.

JB: That's anomalous as well. But I think there's a frustration on the part of some of my colleagues that I'm not as engaged in the more technical disciplines that I grew up in. I think that there's a disappointment in that regard, not to the point where people, say, confront me about that but people whose life is econometrics would wish that mine still were, I suppose. [laughter]

CAC: Sure. It would make them feel better if you were.

JB: Yes.

CAC: Let me share an older story with you and this is really for posterity to hear also. When I came here in 1951, there was an older member of the department who was a fine scholar, a concerned teacher. He had been chair at various times. In his sixties, he had all kinds of personal problems, family problems. He took to martinis, and then he took to stronger, and he became alcoholic. He knew that and he regretted it but he was old and he wasn't well. The thing that saved him were the brothers at St. John's—saving as anyone can be saved. He would present himself up there, and they would take him for two or three weeks, and dry him out.

JB: Oh, my gosh.

CAC: He attended morning prayer. He wasn't a Roman Catholic; although, as a medieval historian, he knew a lot about the church. He found a home there and a support and it gave him the strength then to come back and face a terrible family situation and other problems here at the university. He shared this with me after he retired. The brothers up there were his home. He knew he couldn't repay them but what he did was write an essay, *Monte Cassino, Metten, and Minnesota* [by August Charles Krey].

JB: Yes.

CAC: It's the Benedictines as they came. He doesn't tell this story there but to me it was always a very touching thing that he found a home in that way, a place of security, a place to restore himself, and I think it speaks to some of the things we're talking about. I think there are many of us at various levels, who are not alcoholic, who still have various needs that this institution doesn't meet—we shouldn't expect it to. Right? I'm coming back to the theme that you spoke of of the melancholy, what poor Jimmy Carter called the malaise, which was a terrible word.

JB: For Jimmy Carter . . . it was a mistake at that time but he sure knows how to be a former president, I think.

CAC: [laughter] Does that advance our conversation or are we kind of resolving it now for purposes of this afternoon on that score? We recognize, I think, together a common longing and a difficulty of holding it off. Are there other parts of the university or your career or your discipline or public life that you would like to come back to? [pause] You've been active in various community, boards, and movements, and so forth but you've not been active in the administration of the university?

JB: No, I haven't been. I was an administrator here in the School of Public Affairs from 1969 to 1976 but once I stopped doing that, I stopped doing that; and I have never had a position in Central Administration here.

CAC: I'm going back over your CV. You are chair of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Advisory Committee on Cable Television . . . this is going back some ways . . . State Planning Advisory, Advisory Committee on Management and Personnel Development, advisor to Governor Wendell Anderson . . .

JB: Yes.

CAC: . . . Council of Directors Catholic Economic Organization, Outstanding Young Man of . . . etcetera, etcetera. You have found an outlet for your concerns?

JB: The Citizens League is an important organization here in the Twin Cities. I'm on the board there. I've been on the board a couple of times. I was just president for a year of the Citizens League and we did, I think, a very important report during the time that I was president which incorporates a lot of my thinking about how government ought to operate. I continue to be involved with that organization.

CAC: Are there very many other academic people on that?

JB: John Adams is involved there.

CAC: Okay.

JB: There aren't many others besides us. Barbara Lukermann, Fred's wife, who is on our faculty at Humphrey . . . she, in fact, is going to be the next president of the Citizens League. I hesitate to say this but I should say it. I wish that I were content with being exclusively an academician. I wish that I were but I'm not. I can feel it in me that I'm about to go and get a job again. I can feel it. I'm about to finish writing this book and when I finish it . . . In a way, I hope that I can just go to work on another book and write it but there's something in me that's going to want to pull me out of the academy. In a way, I'm a bit ashamed about that. I think that a professor . . . that there's something sacred about the calling of being a professor and one ought to devote oneself to it. In that sense, I recognize myself as being something of a hybrid and almost a heretic by having spent that dozen years half way in and half way out.

CAC: But in your own personal life that was very rewarding.?

JB: Oh, yes! For me that was very rewarding and I don't believe that it was bad for the university for me to do that. I don't think that. It's just that I have a classical notion of the university that the university ought to stand apart from the society in a way—it's an odd thing for a person to say given the life that I've lived—that the university ought to be a critic of the society. It ought not to be handmaiden of government. It ought to be a separate way by which society sees itself and values itself. It ought to be a counter to the market.

CAC: Oh, but there's an old religious term for that . . . to be in the world but not of the world, John.

JB: [laughter] Touché. Touché. In a way, I suppose that's right. In a way, my notion of a professor is similar to the notion of a priest but that's not me. I'm of two minds about it. I mean what I just said . . . some part of me anyway wishes that I were different in that regard but I'm not.

CAC: Like the rest of us, you're a very complicated person. [laughter]

JB: [laughter] I guess we all are. It's embarrassing for me to understand more of myself over time. I suppose we all do. We all see the foibles, and weaknesses, and so on better as time goes by.

CAC: You're in your late fifties now . . . you're fifty-seven, fifty-eight?

JB: Fifty-seven.

CAC: So, you've got to decide what to do with those ten years, John?

JB: Yes.

CAC: There are ways in the academy, moving in and out, that have been rewarding and enriching, I'm sure both ways?

JB: I would just do it again . . . go off into government again. I keep on contradicting myself, I guess. I wish more people in the academy would be drawn to go off and be in politics. [laughter] Here I just said that . . .

CAC: An example would be your friend, Art Naftalin. He's another one.

JB: Yes.

CAC: He didn't know the legislature but he was Commissioner of Administration . . .

JB: Yes, that's right and mayor.

CAC: . . . and mayor for a number of years and then he came back into the academy, did he not, in Public Affairs?

JB: Yes, he did but he's regretted it and he was not made happy by it because for him, he had been away long enough so that he couldn't really return to the academy.

CAC: He was too far behind in academic things?

JB: Yes.

CAC: Are we kind of reaching the . . .

JB: I think so. I appreciate having the chance to talk with you and appreciate the effort that you're undertaking in this. It's going to be interesting for someone someday.

CAC: I hope for lots of folks, yes. I founded an archives . . . the Social Welfare History archives here?

JB: Yes, yes.

CAC: From the archivists, I learned as much as from my training as an historian that archivists are constantly trying to guess what inquirers five years, ten years, fifty years from now will be interested in.

JB: Yes.

CAC: The conversations I'm having, I'm sure, violate some of the codes of the handbooks of oral interviewing because they are not as focused but I have a sense that I am trying to reach the wholeness, and the variety, and the complexity, and the contradictions with lots of people so that the academy really be better on record. It is not a matter of serving on the Faculty Consultative Committee alone; although, that can be important in some instances.

JB: Wouldn't you like to have a peek thirty, forty, fifty years from now at what people would find interesting about what it is we've been doing here?

CAC: Oh, yes. Oh, but I'm scared of that forty, fifty years, John. I'm more melancholy than thee, I suspect. I thank you!

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

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