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Interview with Gordon Bivens (Norman Silber)
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Prof. Silber: This is an interview with Gordon Bivens. The interview is taking place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, March 15, 1983. The interviewer is Norman Silber.

Prof. Bivens, can I begin by asking you how you came to be involved, first with the consumer movement, and then with ACCI specifically?

Prof. Bivens: I got involved in the movement primarily through teaching responsibilities at Iowa State University at that time. I was teaching some consumer courses, and through a regional research committee that Dick Morse and I served on, came to know about CCI. Dick, in a sense, alerted me to this organization and suggested it might be of interest and might help in terms of getting to know people, and to generally help in my professional role.

I think my first meeting with CCI was in 1957 or '58, at Cincinnati. It was out of that, then, that I got involved in the organization. It must have been 1958. It was a lot smaller then.

NS: Do you remember how small it was?

GB: I think there might have been 30 or 40 people that attended—very informal and folksy and nice in some respects because of that—but not very structured. I suppose you could say, not very professional in some ways. It was just kind of a clubby sort of thing at that point. I don't mean that to be critical, but it's a vast difference between what it was like then and what you see today, I think, as an organization.

It was at that meeting that I first came to know Stewart Lee, who, I think, was taking over as editor of the *Newsletter* at that time. I don't have documentation with me which would tell me that for sure. Stewart was at that meeting, and he, I thought, was taking notes in connection with the *Newsletter*, but I guess he wasn't editor yet.

NS: The *Newsletter* in 1960 was edited by Stewart Lee.

GB: In '60, yes.

NS: In '59 by Stewart Lee.

GB: Oh, OK, then this must be a little bit in error.

NS: In '58 by Wilmoth Price.

GB: It sounds as though this should have 1959 on it, if that is the case. I think he was gearing up to take over [laughter]. It was a fortuitous introduction, because Stewart, over the years, has become one of my closest friends, I would say, and so a chance meeting there has been a very rich friendship, both professionally and personally. That was very nice.

I don't know if it would be any use to you or not, but an impression I carry with me from that meeting is Henry Harap giving a paper. Henry is a very meticulous person and a very thorough person. He was giving reflections on an experience he had in India. I must admit, I don't remember a lot of the content, but I do remember the circumstances of his presentation. I remember him coming out and unfolding something. I couldn't imagine what it was, but it finally ended up a very tiny little lecturn for his notes. It was about six inches wide and eight inches long, and he had his cards on there. He couldn't see down to the table, of course, so he carried around this portable lectern. I remember how he went on and on.

It was a long talk about this experience he had in India. I had known him before, and was impressed. Colston Warne was at that meeting. Ed Metzen, Arch Troelstrup, Ray Price, and I'm sure others, but I remember those specifically. It was on a campus then, I think, and a very inexpensive meeting—very, very folksy, as I said.

NS: You were at Iowa State?

GB: I was at Iowa State then. That may confuse you a little bit because I am at Iowa State now, but I haven't been all of the time. I'm a returnee.

NS: What was it that Richard Morse said to you that convinced you to go to that meeting?

GB: I don't know if I can remember words, but it was kind of a general enthusiasm and a general feeling that he attached some importance to it.

NS: Would you have considered yourself a consumer economist at that time?

GB: I was trying to become one, I think. I was very new in my career, and I had kind of switched. My training is in economics and my Ph.D. was in agricultural production economics, but it was late in my study that I began to feel I was more interested in some things related more to the consumer and the household and the economic aspects of the family.

I had an opportunity to teach in that area at Iowa State while I was still finishing my degree. I was really kind of re-gearing—if you will—not having taken my degree work in the heart of the consumer economics or consumption economics, but taking the economic theory that I got in a good solid degree and then transposing it into the consumer area. I was in the process of doing that when I became familiar with Dick and ACCI.

NS: Was there such a thing as a discipline in consumer economics when you were doing this?

GB: There were people that were outstanding in economics, who had an interest in the area. Their interest often took different forms, of course. There were those who took an institutional approach, much like Colston Warne, and there were those who might take a more theory-oriented approach. Some of Elizabeth Hoyt's work, I think, would be in that vein, and perhaps you think of Margaret Reid and Hazel Kyrk and others in that vein also. So, there were individuals; however, programs of study that would be clearly identified were pretty few and far between, I think.

NS: Was it the case that you would feel either out of place, or a lone wolf at the other conventions one would go to in your field—economics conventions—prior to this?

GB: I think I could answer that better in light of how I have come to feel about it than how I felt at that point. I've come to look at it very much that way. This is the meeting where there is almost an optimal blend of professional and mental stimulation and colleagueship and friendship. It's of a size that still lends itself to some friendly encounters, yet there is a meatiness about the program that is stimulating and challenging and topnotch. I feel this meeting is very special compared to most professional meetings that I go to. I don't mean to knock the others, but it has a very special flavor for me. I think it is that blend of things that makes it special.

NS: These meetings, beginning you say in '58 or '59, that you were going to; you talk about their folkiness. Would you say that at that time, there was either a common set of goals, objectives, or ambitions for the organization as you perceived it? Were you aspiring to become a certain kind of an organization at that time?

GB: I don't know for sure. I think that there was a clear commitment to trying to help in the broad field of consumer education at that time. I think that clearly, the emphasis was on education. I don't think there was as much emphasis on research or policy analysis or those kinds of things as there is now. In that sense, I guess, you could say it was fairly clear.

I don't know if I could say that I was that privy in those early years to the stated goals of the organization to be real sure about that. My feeling is that as I've observed it, my commitment was to try and help those who might have some sort of teaching responsibility to do somewhat of a better job, and so I guess that would be a fairly clear goal—if you want to call it that—and I think that was it.

NS: But for you, the need that it filled, the void that it filled in terms of your academic needs?

GB: It introduced me to some of the people in the field I had only known through some writing; some I didn't know at all. So I got some breadth of exposure to their thoughts and got some insight into sources of information, printed materials, and that kind of thing.

In the early '60s, there was a kind of an uneasy sort of courtship, not courtship exactly, but an uneasy sort of holding hands or almost to hold hands kind of situation between ACCI and some of the leaders in the consumer movement who were politically active. That was kind of exciting in some sense to see what was happening in the political arena that had implications for the consumer interest.

For example, in '62, when President Kennedy announced his consumer advisory council, etc., there were people that we knew, some of whom had been active in the organization or that we had come to know through the organization and there were some things like that that were broadening in terms of one's general insights, and perhaps some deepening of a person's understanding of what the movement was. It served a real purpose for me in that regard.

NS: You suggested that that was an episode rather than an ongoing political....

GB: Yes. I think that was a high point, perhaps. I don't mean to say there haven't been other instances when there have been somewhat similar kinds of things, but that was sort of a high point. Of course, ACCI has taken the position that it will not be political in the usual sense, so it's been pretty careful to toe that line. I don't mean to say that's a change, either. It wasn't political then, *per se*, but there were people that were involved with both phases.

NS: I spoke with Dick Morse earlier today. Would he be one of those people?

GB: Yes. In fact, Dick was on the first presidential advisory council, of course.

NS: Could you talk a little bit about when you first became involved with the executive leadership level in the organization?

GB: [laughter] You know, I am not sure I can. I'm really not sure when I was first on the board, so I'm a little hard pressed. It would have been about the early-'60s or mid-'60s.

NS: I can tell you that.

GB: Can you? OK. That one year service in '61 and back in '64, going on through '68 or so. I know I was president in '67 and '68. So it was in the mid-'60s primarily except for that one single year in the early '60s, going on into the latter part of the '60s, and was vice president when Bob McEwen was president. Then, I served as president following him in '67 and '68.

NS: A lot of people join organizations and never become terribly involved in the actual running, administration, and executive leadership of the organization. Just as an aside, I know that's the case with me and the American Historical Association. What was it that spurred you to become as active as you did become?

GB: Oh, I don't know. Some of it, I think very early, was that election where I served in '61. I think it was probably a matter where there weren't too many available [laughter].

Later I was a little more serious. I really became very fond and very committed to the organization, thinking of it was as special as I have indicated, for the reasons I have indicated. If you do feel that way about an organization, you have a responsibility to contribute to it.

It was out of that, that I was willing and happy and grateful to serve that longer period of time in the '60s. Let's face it, as a young professional, you aren't overlooking the fact that you may need to do that sort of thing for professional reasons, too. I suppose that might enter into it. I really think it was fondness for the organization and the feeling of responsibility to try and do something to help it along.

NS: Was there a sense of excitement about the political courtship between ACCI and consumer leaders that went on in the early '60s? Was that something that involved you?

GB: No, not directly. I can't claim to have been a political activist in any real sense. I just happen to know some of the people pretty well.

NS: So, the first thing that happened was that you joined the board in '61 and then were off for a couple of years. Do you remember why you took the hiatus?

GB: No, I don't. I really don't.

NS: Then you were "cornered" again in '64 and joined in '64. At that time, as I understand it, the major functions in the organization were (1) the conferences and (2) the pamphlets. Were you involved in planning the programs for any of those conferences, or working on any of the pamphlets?

GB: I didn't write any of the pamphlets. I helped review some of them and decisions about whether to publish them or not were made about some of them during the time I was on the executive committee and when I was president, as a matter of fact. I was program chairman one year. I think that would probably have been '63 or '64. It was when the annual conference was in Madison, at least, that I served as program chairman. I was active in that role then.

NS: Do you remember how you conceived of the problem of putting together the program for the Council at that time? I know that certain programs all seemed to have particular themes. I don't have your 1964 conference program.

GB: Gosh, I don't recall its theme either. I do remember one thing that comes to mind right now. That was the year that we invited David Kaplovitz to come up from Chicago. We knew of his work, which later became known as *The Poor Pay More.*

He tells the story—and I guess it's the truth; I have no reason to doubt him, really—that he thought of the title on his way up to Madison to give the paper. He had to have a title for his presentation. He was riding along on the train—I think it was coming to Madison to give that paper—and he thought, "Gee that would be a good title," so he jumped on *The Poor Pay More,* which then, of course, went on to the book.

NS: Did you invite Kaplovitz to appear on the panel?

GB: Yes. I know we had a fair emphasis on low-income and poverty issues that year, but I don't know that the whole theme of the conference was that. I'm sorry, I just don't know. He was one of our key speakers; he may have been keynote that year.

NS: In reviewing the pamphlets that you reviewed, do you remember what kind of criteria you were trying to get the organization to use, to evaluate the publications that it would sponsor?

GB: I don't know if I could be as explicit in answering that as I would like. Some people had the goal for the pamphlet series, of filling a need that textbooks don't fill, and also, then, be a little bit more durable than mimeographed materials, etc.

We were seeing it as a teacher aid, in a sense, in providing information--some of which might have a short half-life—and therefore pamphlets seemed appropriate. Maybe some of the topics had a longer duration than that, so I don't mean to imply that all of it was short-lived.

The point would be that they might not be long enough to be book form, but still important enough to have between two covers so people could get their hands on them. The criteria that we used, I feel, were not always as carefully developed as maybe they should have been. I think that's partly a matter of the organization evolving, and maybe not being entirely clear of the audience it might serve; and maybe different people having different views of just what the pamphlet series was to do. I don't think the criteria were always that carefully thought out.

NS: I have not read all of them; I've looked at them. I cannot think of any that weren't directed to the ultimate consumer, and yet the membership of the organization at that time was primarily consumer educators.

GB: I think that was a bit of ambiguity on our part, as an organization. We were trying to serve the consumer educator primarily, but we also were seeing ourselves as being of some direct service to the ultimate consumer.

I'm not sure that we ever carried that off very successfully, frankly, except through our members doing things that were of use to the ultimate consumer. But as an organization directly useful to the ultimate consumer, I think we had very limited success.

NS: I've seen compilations that were done in the annual report to the board, etc.—I think it was Ed Metzen—of the number of pamphlets that were sold each year. He kept very close track. In fact, I tried to graph it. Here is what happened to the pamphlet sales. They really skyrocket between '56, and they make a dip which bottoms out in 1960 and increases again in the early '60s and then drops down again.

It shows a spurt. There must have been a couple of large classes or something, because we are talking in the neighborhood of 3500 pamphlets, which is not a huge number, and then it really falls off about 1968 and '69. These numbers include the *Journal*. Were the pamphlets primarily used in consumer education classes? I wonder how they were distributed.

GB: I don't know for sure. My guess would be that they were used in consumer education classes and by extension workers probably more than any. I'm not sure if we have any other really good evidence on who used them, who distributed them.

NS: How was it that the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* came into being? Did that relate in some way to the deficiencies you saw in the pamphlets?

GB: I think it bears on it or has some relationship, although I don't know if I would say that's the primary motivating influence for the *Journal*. I, for one, had an uneasiness about how useful the pamphlet series was. That doesn't mean there wasn't some good material in them. It was more a matter of how were they used, how did they get out, to some extent. Were we picking the right topics for them?

It was along in this period of time—in the mid- to late-60s, that the organization was beginning to examine itself more seriously as to its audience and who it was going to try to serve. We took on a real commitment then to serving the professionals in the consumer affairs field. Many of them were in education, but some were in other areas but still professionals in the consumer affairs area.

We decided, that if we were in fact going to serve those people, we needed to serve them in at least two ways: (1) an ongoing source of the frontier thinking via articles that seem to be a way of doing it, and (2) serve them in terms of allowing them an outlet for their research and other creative writings. It was out of those two things as much as anything—as well as perhaps a nagging feeling of the dissatisfaction of how well the pamphlet series was serving people—that we began to think seriously about the *Journal*.

Not unrelated, and certainly related to that second point, was the increasing need for young faculty members in academic settings to have a respectable outlet for their materials for tenure purposes. I don't mean to say that that justifies the establishment of a journal, but it could not be ignored either as a need as long as there were good materials coming that justified printing; and if it could serve the purpose of tenure, that's fine too. I think there was greater clarity that came about on the part of the organization, that it was indeed, serving the professionals in the field, and not, perhaps, able to serve the ultimate consumer very well or very directly, but would serve them through the membership. That came about during the '60s. It helped lead to the *Journal* establishment.

NS: Can you think of concrete examples of—or evidence of—obstacles that people in the field have to getting published in other journals?

GB: I don't know of hard factual evidence. There were people in ACCI who were saying that it was sometimes hard to find journals in the straight line disciplinary areas to publish something in the consumer field.

NS: You were discussing the problems that professionals had in publishing before the *Journal* came along.

GB: As I said, I think there were expressions of need. We didn't make a survey in any organized sense to determine how many people had rejections from existing journals, etc., but we certainly got comments saying it was an area that was hard to get published in some of the then-existing journals.

NS: When would you say that the idea for a journal took shape?

GB: Again, I don't have good records on this. There were discussions of it at the board meeting—I would estimate in '65. I know there were in '66 and there might have even been some in '65. In fact, we made the decision in '66, if I remember correctly, to establish it—or a tentative one at least.

I remember I had been asked if I would serve as *Journal* editor, and I needed to think that over and get some commitments from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee so I could do that, because it did entail quite a bit in terms of secretarial assistance and time and one thing and another. I was trying to think that through for myself and get institutional okay, etc., after that meeting.

In the Summer of '66, Father McEwen and I were both at the IOCU Conference in Nathanya, Israel. I remember going over after Bob arrived at the conference and sitting with him while he was eating his evening meal. For some reason—I don't know why this was—we were both sort of reluctant to bring up this matter of what was my decision about the *Journal* editorship. He was president at the time.

Finally, I raised it. I said, "Bob, I've been giving it thought, and as you know, I wanted to do it. I think now I can say I will do it." He said, "Well, I was wondering what your decision was," so we talked about it at that meeting. There were some other things that were fun about that meeting. Father McEwen had some people come. This is completely off the topic.

NS: This is in Israel?

GB: Yes. He had someone come to pick him up to go from Tel Aviv. We had already gone from Nathanya to Tel Aviv. Someone was coming from Tel Aviv to pick him up to go over from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and he asked me if I wanted to go. I did, because I wanted to go into Jordan and visit some of the places there.

So we went up over the hills of Judea in this taxi that had come to get him. The driver couldn't operate the air conditioning unit going up the hill because it was too much for the engine; it would overheat. Here we were, sweltering as we went up over the hills. Fr. McEwen—with foresight that a good beer drinker, I guess, would have—had stocked up before we started up over the hills. He was sitting in the back, enjoying his beer and weathering it very well.

NS: There are two questions that I have. One is, do you recall those preliminary stages of the planning the *Journal*? First of all, I think I sent you earlier a copy of a letter I found from you to Arch Troelstrup, expressing certain ambiguities in the organization, and also proposing certain kinds of solutions, among them a journal. I wonder if one of the reasons for the journal was to try to resolve the ambiguity that you were just talking about betwen ACCI and the feasibility of providing service to the ultimate consumer.

GB: Clearly that was in my mind, at least. As I saw it, at least—and I think a good many people joined me in that—I felt that if we could establish a journal that was a good journal, it would do an awful lot to solidify the field and really carry the whole field a step further professionally.

NS: Do you remember if there were any objections to creating the *Journal*?

GB: Yes, I think there were. We knew that it would be a fairly heavy financial load for the organization, and that always means giving up something. You know, you are never sure if what you are giving up is worth it, in a sense. It meant giving up the pamphlet series, for example.

NS: Was that clear?

GB: I think so. I believe that was clear that we could not do both. It meant that we would be committing ourselves to a journal, and that if there were other things that we wanted to do in the future, that we didn't know about, those might be foreclosed to us, because if we started a journal we had to see it through—at least to a certain point.

So, there was some reluctance to take on a heavy financial commitment. I think it was primarily that. Maybe there was something else, too. I think there were some who felt a little ambiguity between research emphasis and a strictly educational emphasis. I don't see those as being completely dichotomized, myself. There can be a relative weighing of those in favor of one or the other in a person's mind. I think that some people thought that a journal would probably lead us into more research emphasis than had been true in the past. Not that it had been completely absent, but that it would go that direction more. They weren't quite sure if that was exactly what we should do or whether we should stay pretty heavily weighted toward serving the educational function primarily.

NS: Who were the spokesmen for that point of view?

GB: I don't know if I could really be clear about that. I'm not really sure I could put names on that; I just know there was that discussion.

NS: Clearly, a journal of unknown composition would require an editor who had the confidence of everybody else in the organization. Do you have an idea about how you were chosen to be the editor of the *Journal*?

GB: I thank you for your implied compliment. I'm not sure whether it was quite that way at that point. I would like to think that I enjoyed a fair amount of confidence on the part of the majority of the people, but I think that equally—or more important perhaps—in the decision was the fact that we needed to have a home for it, too, and at that point I probably had as good a chance of providing a home base for it as anyone.

NS: Where was that?

GB: At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I think that just can't be ignored. I was director of the Center for Consumer Affairs there and had some administrative leeway to recommend, at least, doing some things that would provide a home for it, and had wonderful backup support administratively for it, so was blessed. I think that, really, it was seen as being a natural place.

The newly-established Center for Consumer Affairs there was within the aegis of the extension division at the University of Wisconsin, so in one sense, was not suspect of commercial tainting or anything, so could provide a sort of purified home for it.

I think that all those circumstances made it sort of a natural, plus the fact that the University of Wisconsin Press is one of the few university presses in the country that is interested in dealing with journal matters. I was able to deal with them at fairly close range and work out the relationship, which continues to this day. In a sense, I was sort of in the right spot at the right time more than anything, with the possible exception that I was very much in favor of the establishment of the journal. I was clearly identified as being in favor.

NS: I've not read your publications prior to the *Journal*. Could one have read the kinds of things that you published personally before you created the journal, and anticipated the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* in any way either in tone or in style?

GB: Not a lot. I had published some things but I don't know that very many people would have been intimately familiar with those.

NS: What I'm trying to understand is...

GB: Why I was chosen! [laughter]

NS: Why you were chosen, and what was, in a sense, anticipated for the *Journal* by choosing you.

GB: It's interesting for me to contemplate too. As I say, a lot of it may have been circumstantial. On the other hand, there was evidence that I was interested in the organization. That was pretty clear by that time, so I don't think that was in doubt.

That was true, of course, of a lot of other people. I guess I don't know what went on in other people's minds in that decision. Maybe it was as much one of those things where if you open your mouth, you tend to have to accept the consequences, and I had been pushing for the *Journal*. I just felt it was an important professional step for the organization and maybe it was the sort of thing that if you think it's so important, do it. I don't know.

NS: What is actually involved in starting up a journal? What were the biggest problems that you had in creating the *Journal*?

GB: There were a number, of course, all the way from how do you insure adequate review processes for the manuscripts—certainly that's an important one—to nitty-gritty things like the design of the thing, because, of course, we had to do that too. I got a lot of help from the University of Wisconsin Press on that, but we still had to play a part in it.

We had to work out the financial arrangements with the press and work internally in our office to get our secretaries to be familiar with the editing processes and markings, and that kind of thing which would be followed, and the procedure with the mailing that would be mailed to reviewers, and the mailings to authors. The whole structure of internal things had to be developed from scratch and working with the University of Wisconsin Press in getting deadlines established, etc.

The one thing I felt as queasy about as anything was being sure that we were doing an adequate job of reviewing, and that has evolved. At the very first issue, we felt some need—after having made the decision to establish the *Journal*—to get a copy out so that people had some concrete evidence that we meant it. We used the board primarily as the review group, and I think for the purposes we had in mind, that was probably a reasonable decision. It wasn't the thing that we would continue to be doing, and we evolved from that. The first issue, and perhaps most of the second, was done that way. Then we evolved into the practice of using reviewers other than the board.

NS: All of whom were members of ACCI?

GB: Not always. Most, and maybe even all, for awhile. In later years, during the time I was serving as editor, not always members, but people who I felt had some judgment to make in the area that was covered in the manuscript. Wonderful cooperation usually from reviewers! I really was lucky on that because I know how badly I fall behind when I get articles to review. I had some of that, but I don't think I had my share, really. I really was pretty lucky.

NS: I think one could divide the membership into various constituent parts: consumer behavior, consumer education. I don't mean to be definitive about it, but were there extensive discussions about what the proper mix in the journal should be?

GB: There was some discussion. All of this took place primarily in the board during the early years, and then reports to the membership at the annual meeting, but more extensive discussion would take place in the board.

There was discussion like, "Let's try and remember that a good many of our people are secondary education teachers, and make the journal appropriate for them as well as those who might be interested in other things, research *per se*," and one thing and another. We never tried, that I could recall, to say there shall be one article in the area of public school education and one article on consumer behavior with respect to credit. We never went to an allocation process like that. We did try to keep in mind that, hopefully, there would be a sufficient variety of subject matter and a sufficient variety in terms of approach; maybe some that would almost be descriptive in nature rather than highly analytical and some that would be fairly analytical, so that, in terms of coverage and content areas as well as approach to it, there would be some interest on the part of almost everybody, we hoped. In that sense, we talked about it but we never did come to the place, I think, where we said, "There needs to be an article in such-and-such-field always."

NS: I'm looking at the first issue.

GB: You don't have another copy, do you?

NS: This was sent to me by Mel Zelenak. I was just going to note that it states, "The primary objective of the *Journal* as determined by the CCI executive committee is to report consumer-focused research. Secondarily, it shall serve as a forum on consumer issues, present book reviews and perform related functions appropriate to a scholarly professional journal, dedicated to facilitating and improving the performance of consumer affairs professionals whose academic and/or professional training and current activities cover a variety of fields and disciplines."

GB: It's been a long time since I heard that.

NS: I note that later on—I confess I don't have the exact date in which it entered the *Journal*, but at a later point—that is qualified by saying that the *Journal* articles are encouraged to have a "policy thrust" or a "policy focus," or "recommend policy alternatives in terms of consumer policy." Can you help me out in what ways the early articles seemed to you to require a certain refocusing? The early *Journal* articles must have been evaluated or reviewed, and you must have decided that you wanted to redirect or to encourage a certain new kind of publication.

GB: I must admit that I don't remember a great deal surrounding that decision. It's pretty vague in my mind, except that we did not want to preclude the policy analysis manuscripts.

NS: You could read that policy statement that I'm referring to.

GB: OK, "Manuscripts may be theoretical, methodological, philosophical, historical, empirical or of a review nature. They should develop policy implications for the consumer interest. These could include the implications for government, household or professional policy." This one is Winter, 1975.

NS: I'm afraid I couldn't fit all of the journals into my suitcase.

GB: I don't know if this was when Joe Uhl was editor, and if that is a change that he made, or whether we had made it before he took over. I know I was interested as editor, however, that articles didn't stop short of drawing the implications for policy. I did have that as an interest but I don't honestly remember whether we developed that statement while I was editor or not.

I felt that sometimes people presented their articles, and occasionally at least, went that step of drawing implications with regard to policy. I felt that was appropriate for a professional organization in a field such as this to do. It didn't mean they couldn't get it published without it, but it was appropriate where the substance of the article really seemed to merit it to do that.

NS: I imagine that it would be hard, but are there issues or articles of which you were proudest, ones that you thought had greater impact or power than others?

GB: That is a hard one, really is hard. This isn't answering your question, but let me back off to another point that is not related directly, but I think it may bear mentioning. That has to do with academic freedom and the location of the *Journal* where I happen to be, or at least on a campus—let me put it that way.

There was an article in the very first *Journal* that had to do with a possible conflict in motives between the interests of labor. That is, is there an incompatibility in the interest of a person as far as their role as worker is concerned and their joining a labor union, for example, and their consumer interest? That issue was being raised.

Well, this is the very first issue of the *Journal*, and a person at the national level in the labor movement in Washington, DC called the president of the University of Wisconsin at that time because he had gotten word that this was going to appear in this journal and asked about it, indicating his dissatisfaction about it. The inquiry came down to me through administrative channels about whether this was going to happen, and were we satisfied that it was sound and wanted to go ahead and publish it. I said yes; it seemed reasonable to me that we should. I gave the reasons and explained the process by which it had been prepared for publication, and that was the end of it. I never heard anything more. That was a very happy day for me in terms of backing up academic freedom and illustrated to me the importance of having that kind of freedom for the person who serves as editor.

I'm very grateful to the University of Wisconsin for that. I think they did a beautiful job. It isn't just as simple as that, because they have a very close affinity to the labor movement, a history of being very closely attached. This person who called the president of the University of Wisconsin, I think, probably knew the president personally. But, there it was; academic freedom was protected, and I think that is awfully important.

NS: You must have gone that far back (referring to the very first issue) because it (the attempts to control from outside) stopped at that point, right?

GB: I've never had anything happen since that was challenged along those lines. Maybe that's saying our manuscripts haven't been political or something [laughter], but we didn't deliberately choose against that. I think there are some that could have been challenged, but they haven't been.

NS: Was it true always that ultimate editorial authority was vested in you while you were editor?

GB: Yes. I never had any feeling that I couldn't exercise that authority or that I could side-step the responsibilities that went with that.

NS: Did you ever side-step negative referee reviews in order to publish?

GB: There were times when I had conflicting reviews, and occasionally, I would send out for an additional one. I'm quite sure that at times, I took the prerogative of making that decision without the third review, so I would do that and I felt that it was OK.

NS: Well, you sort of tangentially answered my question.

GB: Yes. I'm sorry I'm not answering your question about outstanding articles. There are many, I'm sure, that I would be happy to say I would take great pride in. I don't know that I could point to one and say, "This above all others."

NS: Let me put it another way. Rather than you taking pride in them, are there articles that drew strong reactions? Are there articles that involved intense heated discussion in the community of the consumer professional?

GB: I should have kept a journal myself at the time I was doing this; it would have helped. The article by Schuler in the first issue probably provoked a fair amount of discussion. I don't know that it was controversy, but Taussig's article on "The Dual Nature of Poverty" later are examples of articles that elicited quite a bit of conversation.

NS: Do you happen to know which ones were reprinted most?

GB: No, I don't know that.

NS: Or issues that would get ordered for use in classes, special orders?

GB: I don't have any systematic inventory of that. As I recall, articles like Ruby Turner Morris' article on "Quality in Consumer Goods," using Consumers Union data, I think was used quite a bit in classes—an interesting piece. I don't have any kind of a real good substantial documentation on that.

NS: Some journals use a thematic approach; they will devote an entire issue to one theme.

GB: I don't believe we gave serious thought to that while I was editor. For one thing, I'm not sure we really had the resources at the time to do what I think it would take to do a thematic approach, that is, contacting people and making necessary arrangements to get the theme developed. We really were at the mercy of submissions—given the way in which the bootstrap operation that we were first to use in getting things underway and going in those early years—so I just don't know that we were in a position to. At any rate, we did not.

NS: This is a continuation of the interview with Dr. Bivens, and it is taking place on Thursday, March 17, 1983.

Prof. Bivens, did you give some thought to publishing letters to the editor in the *Journal*?

GB: Not really, not seriously, at least. We did want to offer an opportunity for people to publish things that were of a shorter nature than the usual article, so we developed the viewpoints and communication section, which was a more informal exchange of ideas and viewpoints; but no, we didn't consider letters to the editor as such.

NS: Did you think that the letters might detract from it, or was it a matter of space?

GB: I think it was maybe a matter of space and also a matter of timeliness, if you got right down to it. There is quite a lag in publishing a journal--as you know—between the time it's prepared and the time that it appears, so there would be that kind of thing to take into account. It just didn't seem, at least to me—others might differ—but I did not feel it was particularly appropriate in a journal that was serving primarily an academic audience to have letters as such.

NS: At a certain point, and I'm not clear about the details, but I do recall reading in the board minutes, your brief report to the board regarding a review of the *Journal* by the University of Wisconsin Press in the course of its review which appears, from the record, to have been somewhat critical. Could you tell me what you remember about it?

GB: I'm a little removed from that, but there was what is called a standard review of journals that they are serving as publishers for. My recollection, although it is a little fuzzy, is that it was done as a standard operational procedure and that there was some criticism among the reviewers of the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* at that time.

My feeling was that it could be due to a number of things. One was, I don't think the reviewers were particularly attuned to the nature of the academic field that we were trying to serve—the area of consumer affairs—so they might have some trouble from that perspective.

Another might be that we were, of course, struggling to get going on the road but showing an open flank, in a sense. Our product was evolving, and therefore might not be quite as highly developed and as highly analytical, perhaps, or in other ways meet up with quite the same appearance that journals that were established for a longer period of time would have. So, I think I can understand some of the criticsm. The thing that may have hurt just a little bit more—if I recall correctly—was that it was criticism, in one sense, from quarters that might not know the field.

NS: Do you think the same criteria should have been used to judge the *Journal* as were used to judge the other professional journals—i.e., the *American Economic Review*, etc.—or do you think that slightly different standards should have applied?

GB: I think there ought to be a hard look. There ought to be a careful review and standards ought to be high as far as the process of the review is concerned; you don't have sloppiness taking place in terms of what can be included in a professional journal. On the other hand, I think that the degree of quantitative approach vs. other approaches does differ from one field to another, and our journal was reflecting the fact that there were people who were interested in the area of consumer affairs as a major focus—that we're approaching it from a good many disciplines, not all of which would take a highly quantitative approach—or at least they would approach it and use the quantitative methods in somewhat different ways than might be true in some other fields. So, I think it might be true that it be a recognition that there is a difference in the purpose being served by that particular journal.

NS: How selective was the *Journal* in its early days, and did it become more selective as time went on?

GB: I can't quote the percentages of rejection now. I reported them to the board and to the membership during most of the years in my tenure as editor, but I don't remember them exactly. I'm quite sure they were going up. If you want to put it in terms of rejection, they were going up, or acceptance was going down as time went on.

The first issue or two were, very frankly, almost like proceedings of a conference. They did go through a review process in the sense that they were sent to people for peer review. But they were on hand from the conference. I don't mean to denigrate those articles at all, but the process was different for processing those than was true later. I don't suppose we did include all of the papers that had been given at that conference, but there was a difference in the way in which those were generated vs.—I'd say—from issues three and four onward.

NS: This was a new venture and a new discipline in many respects. It must have been difficult deciding just who to send these articles out to.

GB: It was. That was a judgment call based on my awareness of people in the field. I don't suppose I always picked the best, but I tried. It was really a matter of feeling our way.

NS: Would you ever ask somebody who had submitted, what sort of a person ought to review his or her article?

GB: I don't think I did that. I don't recall ever asking someone that. I don't want to prejudge a person's motives, but it opens the door to having their friends reviewing, and I didn't feel that was appropriate. On occasion, someone would send in with their submission a letter of suggestions. I can't remember; I may have used those for some manuscripts occasionally, or for other similar manuscripts. I used it, kind of as a way of getting an awareness of people in fields that I was least familiar with. A kind of a cadre was built up. I may have used it then, occasionally, if I didn't know otherwise. I didn't go out and ask people who should review their articles, no.

NS: I think we did discuss whether there was a particular mix that you decided would go into the *Journal*.

GB: No, not in terms of allocating, in terms of so much home economics-type articles, or some in terms of consumer behavior-type articles, no.

NS: Did you ever feel there was a deficiency in some particular field that said, we aren't getting the articles from this particular area that we ought to be getting?

GB: Let me turn that slightly, if I may—and, I'm afraid, at the expense of sounding negative. There was a time when I felt that we were receiving maybe more—I don't know if it was more than our share—but a fairly high number of manuscripts from marketing.

While I don't think it was inappropriate to have them submitted, usually there may have been some average—maybe more than would have been appropriate for such an outlet. At any rate, it was right of them to think of submitting, but I felt we were really getting an awful lot on marketing, and I began to be concerned because I didn't want it to have more than it should have of that type of article for two reasons: (1) It wasn't a marketing journal, and (2) There are other journals for marketing manuscripts. I was becoming a little concerned whether we were their first choice or not as an outlet. I just generally felt a little uneasy about what I thought might become a little too much emphasis going in that direction. It did take care of itself in the end. We got more coming from other fields, which tended to make the mix pretty good, I felt.

NS: Did the existence of the *Newsletter* allow you to treat book reviews differently than you otherwise might?

GB: I don't know if I ever thought of it that way. In the *Newsletter*, of course, the annotations are quite brief and there can be a lot more of them than when you carry a limited book review section and have them be fairly extensive reviews. I really didn't see that as a competitive problem.

NS: I wasn't thinking of that so much. I was thinking of major problems. I know the history journal's problem is timeliness, and there seems to be a considerable lag and always seems to have been a considerable lag in the journal, in the book reviews a year or two years after their publication. I'm wondering if that was less of a problem for you because the *Newsletter* existed and was able to provide that timeliness, or if it wasn't seen as a problem at all?

GB: I don't know if I ever saw it as a real problem. Maybe I was oblivious— I hope not—but I don't know if I ever perceived it to be a problem for us other than just the built-in problem of a bit of a lag. I don't think it was any more for us than any other journal. I don't think it was solved any more for us except by citation in the *Newsletter*, and citation itself is helpful.

NS: How did the job of book reviewing go on?

GB: We decided deliberately that we wanted to have a book review section, and we asked for reviews on some books. In the early days, it was a little bit helter-skelter, because, well—it just was.

I felt the people we asked to do it did a good job. That's not my point. I'm not sure how complete an array of books we were taking into our purview and asking for reviews from, etc., was. I think it was a little bit happenstance to which ones we became aware of, and therefore, asked for submission for reviews on. Once the *Journal* was better known, the publishers began to make sure that we got them, and I expect our awareness was increased by virtue of that. But that wasn't the case initially.

NS: Did the *Journal* ever take advertising?

GB: No, except for other journals that the University Press was publishing for also. I answered that a little bit fast, maybe. We may have. I guess we took book advertising later. Isn't that strange? I'm a little hard pressed to be certain. We have documentation someplace, I'm sure, but I don't know offhand. I don't remember exactly when the acceptance of advertising took place. I know the first advertising was for other journals. I don't remember when the book advertising became a part of it.

NS: Judging by the degree of uncertainty, I guess it was never a policy matter.

GB: It was a policy matter in that we decided we would never take other than those kinds of advertising. We wouldn't take advertising for products other than books or journals which we thought were things that most of our readership would be interested in learning about, but we didn't want to get into commercial advertising.

NS: For example, I know that the *New York Review of Books* debated whether to accept corporate image advertising which they now take: "We'll make a statement about how hard it is working on some problem and..."

GB: We couldn't have and wouldn't have done that.

NS: Did you receive much feedback about the articles?

GB: Not as much as I would have liked sometimes, or thought we would have. I alluded earlier to the bit of a flap that we had over an article that appeared in the first issue. A leader of the labor movement took exception to the article, etc. There was something about that, both before it appeared and after, in terms of expression of a point of view, but there wasn't a lot that came to me, as editor. As you know, that goes on between people and the authors sometimes, and I wouldn't always know about that, so I don't know that I could vouch for that.

We began to get more and more inquiries about reprints, etc. from people who were writing books especially, which indicated some extended usage, but not a lot of critical kinds of letters coming to the editor's office—or accolades either, as far as that goes—for individual articles.

NS: Was there ever an effort, or did you ever consider an effort to radically change the format of the *Journal*?

GB: For the time that I served, I really was in the position of trying to improve it in an evolutionary fashion, rather than try for an extreme change. I really felt that it had to grow and deepen and mature as a journal.

I didn't feel, during that period of time, that it had shown itself well enough to weather the idea of a very radical change. I felt it really needed to prove itself as a worthwhile venture, generally. I think it was doing that—I really do—but I didn't give serious thought to radical change.

NS: Aside from the selectivity of the submissions, were there any indices that you used to gauge its success or lack of success?

GB: Very informal. The submissions, as you said, and the requests for permission to reprint indicated something. We didn't have any systematic review of citations of articles, for example. We did get quite a lot of feedback at the annual conference; that has a selection bias in that, I suppose. People who come to the conference are likely to be people who appreciate the product—the *Journal* as well as the other products of the organization. We got that kind of feedback, and that tended to be very helpful usually. Sometimes there would be suggestions, and it was nice to hear nice things once in a while.

NS: Was the willingness of the major indexes to include the *Journal* significant?

GB: Yes. We were pleased when that happened. That is a good point. We did take that as evidence of going some place.

NS: As you said, the *Journal* wasn't something that could be terribly current. How did you approach the problem of shelf life for the articles, if you will, transiency and permanency?

GB: I guess it was one of those things that kind of was a judgment call. In the case of a fairly analytical article where the analysis is of relationship among variables, you recognize that those kinds of things may not change a great deal over time. The descriptive information that goes with an article like that may be somewhat dated, but the relationship of variables that they're analyzing might not be drastically different if it's five years old, than if it had been done today. So, I would look at that as perhaps having a longer shelf life, a longer durability in terms of interest, than something that was quite descriptive. If we got an article that was really relying a lot on description—and that mainly—obviously, that loses its currency in a hurry, and so we had to be somewhat sensitive to differences in the nature of the article, I thought.

NS: In this professional field, particularly, there is a problem. We were talking about advocacy yesterday. How well could a journal serve the problem of advocacy if it doesn't indeed, come out in print until a year and a half later, or something like that?

GB: I don't think we could. We did carry articles that were about advocacy. It seems to me we had an article that appraised the effectiveness of, say, the boycotts, for example, at one time. Well, that was carried primarily for its generic interest as a tool of advocacy—not that it would be brand new—if it was or wasn't successful. It would be looking at it as a tool and kind of be characteristic of those that participated, additional information about that kind of thing.

No, we didn't see ourselves as advocates in the traditional sense— advocates in the sense of the consumer interest in the general sense, but not a traditional advocacy approach. As part of that, there would be other considerations, too, for us.

NS: Looking at the *Journal*, not only when you were editor, but subsequently, how do you see its evolution and growth?

GB: I think it has tended to develop quite a bit more research emphasis and quantitative emphasis, although not highly so yet, but it has gone in that direction. I think that is probably appropriate since the organization, for example, at its annual meetings has done the same thing. There has tended to be that evolution in the profession. I don't know that I sense a great deal of difference in terms of the range of things that are covered.

It seems to me we're still tending to cover essentially the same ball park. I think it's more in the relative emphasis on research and maybe more attention to methodology within the research that is being reported more concern about that. I'm sure not answering your question very well, but those are the things that come to mind.

NS: Do you think it has remained as accessible to all the members of the organization as it was in the beginning?

GB: That's a hard question to answer because membership has changed along with it. I believe I am right in saying that the membership of the organization has shifted and has a higher proportion of its membership being either of an institutional nature (libraries, etc.) and those who have college and university affiliations than was true in another time, and fewer who are involved in direct secondary teaching or action programs as such. I'm not saying that is good, bad or indifferent; I'm just saying that's happened.

If that is the case, then I'd say the *Journal* has probably evolved in directions that meet that clientele need pretty well—the increased emphasis on research. Some have greater emphasis on methodology.

I would imagine that if you were to think of just the membership and not think about the expanded readership of the *Journal* now, that probably it's as accessible in terms of people being able to understand it—if that is part of the question by the direct membership—as has been true in the past. I don't want to imply in that answer at all that the articles are the same. I think the membership has changed too, and the membership is much more able to address more sophisticated material.

NS: Dr. Bivens, I would like to return for a bit to your presidency and the activities that were related to that. I guess, automatically, the vice president is the program chairman. Is that the case?

GB: It has been at times, and at other times we haven't, so it hasn't been 100% operable. No, I wouldn't want to say that. I'm trying to think who was program chairman in 1967 or 1968. Do you have that?

NS: I do have a statement here about Clinton Warne. Was it in Pennsylvania?

GB: Yes.

NS: Then it was Clinton Warne.

GB: Right. OK, I do remember. This is nice to have; it helps.

One of the things I do remember about serving as president. I was living in Washington, DC that year on a one-year appointment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, so it was convenient for me to represent ACCI at a couple or three bill signings at the White House. In those bill signings, it was just an interesting experience to go to the White House and go through the rigamarole of being admitted to observe. Obviously, if you are someone from the hinterlands, it was a different experience [laughter].

I remember at one of these—I think it was the Wholesome Meat Act signing--being at the gate to the White House when a car pulled up and someone jumped out and was starting to run through the gate and he was stopped and asked for his credentials. It was Walter Mondale, then in the Senate, and he was forced to present his credentials just as anyone else did!

I do remember that hulk of a man, Lyndon Johnson, at those signings, because after the bill signing, there was always the line of people who got to go through and shake the hand of a president, and that leathery palm! I suppose it had gotten leathry in the process of many political campaigns. My, what a massive hand he had, and what a grasp, and what a big man he was! So, I do remember being there on those occasions. That was an interesting experience.

At Penn State that year, before the annual conference, though, the news came that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. It was just such devastating news. There was a little uncertainty—not too much had come through to us and we didn't know exactly what had happened—but we did know that parts of Washington were on fire. It was a very unusual and very tense situation.

I remember that I was personally concerned for my family, thinking they were in the Washington area. At any rate, we did go on, basically, with the program, but under a very kind of saddened circumstance. It changed the feeling of the program a great deal. I'm not so sure but that it deepened our feelings in some sense for human concerns in the consumer movement as well as human concerns more generally, and therefore, in spite of its terrible aspects, may have had some positive influence on the meeting.

NS: I know it's difficult, but could you be any more concrete than that?

GB: I'm afraid at this point I can't. I think there were some things that were done that were kind of specifically related to the assassination, but I honestly have trouble remembering.

NS: Was there a consideration at that point about the relationship of racism to consumerism, for example?

GB: I can't remember how directly that might have been thought about, or addressed at least. I'm sure it was in the minds of many of us. It couldn't help but have been.

NS: I think it raises a question I really haven't asked of anyone here before, but did it spawn or provoke soul-searching among members to the extent that they began asking why it is that low income consumers—blacks in particular—didn't seem to develop a high sense of consumer awareness and concern?

GB: I think there had already been some of that starting out of the earlier 1960s concern on poverty in general underway. It may have deepened that and gotten more thinking and feeling and action going on that front.

I would be hard pressed to tie it to that exactly, but I think soul searching. I just don't think anyone could have been there under the circumstances. I know that was a tremendous blow to many people in many places, but somehow—gathered in that setting—a lot of us individually and personally were concerned about that issue. It somehow had an impact that I think was magnified.

NS: The *Kerner Commission Report* later would blame the riots on insensitivity of white city governments and insensitivity of white citizens generally to the unemployment and poverty in the black ghettos of the major cities. It leads one to ask just how the consumer movement—do you think—in 1968, reacted to the kind of imperative the *Kerner Report* generated.

GB: Primarily, I think it took the form of informal kinds of involvement of people who had interest in both the consumer movement and the civil rights movement. I think we found more and more people having dual allegiances and working in both camps. I don't know if you could say there were a lot of formal linkages in a group like ACCI. Other groups might be more active in the civil rights movement, but certainly an affinity of interest—you could say —probably was fanned by the events and grew because of them.

NS: How did a long distance relationship between the president and the executive director work?

GB: I don't remember that I found that any serious problem. We've been blessed with awfully good executive directors in ACCI. I didn't sense that was much of a problem. By phone and occasional in-person meetings, we were able to take care of what had to be done. I don't see that as a problem.

NS: What about the committee structure? Was the committee structure constant in those years, or did you set up any of the committees?

GB: I don't know if I can tell you [laughter]. I really am not sure. I do know that we had a very active membership committee the year I was president and I can't remember if that was a new thing for the organization or whether we were just lucky and just had a lot of new activity.

Tom Brooks was named membership chairman. He really got on the ball and got a lot of activity going. It was a year when we increased our membership very substantially—from 1600 or 1700 to 3000, or something like that--thanks to his and his committee's efforts. I honestly can't remember if that was a new committee or just a new breath of life in the committee. I also can't remember if there were any committees that I started new.

NS: I'm not sure, but I think we talked a little bit about the Consumers Union grant.

GB: I don't think we did.

NS: I know the organization in 1968 was receiving more of its money from CU than from membership dues.

GB: That sounds right.

NS: Were you placing a priority on trying to reduce the organization's dependence of CU?

GB: Yes, I'm sure we were. We knew that the time was going to come, probably, when we either would have to, or should not be looking to CU for much, if any, support. Yes, we were mindful that we should be doing that and were taking steps through a membership drive and through rethinking about whether we should raise membership dues.

The *Journal* was also an expensive operation, in terms of being a costly thing. It was also thought that it might attract members. We hoped it might, at least, or help to retain members. We were aware that we were going to have to be weaned.

NS: Do you remember any particular tension at all in the nature of the business meeting? Do you remember what the issues were?

GB: Let's see, in '68.

NS: That would have been the Martin Luther King meeting.

GB: Yes, it would be. I'm having a little trouble remembering whether the business meeting itself had any particular highlights. I guess it didn't; I don't recall.

NS: This meeting seems to have been rather tame today, given the minutes I have read of past meetings.

GB: Yes, it was. They have varied a lot. I don't think we were in a chaotic situation at that business meeting as nearly as I can remember. Interesting. I remember Virginia Knauer was at that meeting and spoke. She was in the role of Special Assistant to the President at that point, or going into it—one or the other—either newly appointed or going.

NS: 1968 woud have been when Nixon was elected; the election was November of '68.

GB: So, she was what role then?

NS: In a year prior to that, she would not have been around, I think. She was a Nixon appointee; that would have been a Johnson year.

GB: She was in the state government in Pennsylvania then, I guess. That was it. She was the state (I forget the exact title) consumer post in the State of Pennsylvania, and she spoke at that conference [laughter].

NS: Why do you remember that?

GB: I remember that one of the products she brought was a wig that she had detected to be rather an inferior product, so she brought it. I remember that I put it on. Kind of a silly thing to remember, isn't it?

NS: Do you remember a conflict over the problem of regulation as a general issue about that time? I know that in those years, there was burgeoning recognition that regulation might not always be to the consumer's advantage. I'm wondering if that might have manifested itself.

GB: I don't remember that it did at that time. I'm having a little trouble being sure whether something was right at that time or not, but I really don't recall that.

NS: I wonder if you would place it earlier or later?

GB: If I were to try to place it, I think I would place it just a little bit later.

NS: I think that covers most of what we were trying to talk about. Thank you very much.

GB: Fine. I've enjoyed it.