

# Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

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ORAL INTERVIEW

SNOW GRIGSBY

Roberta McBride, Interviewer  
March 12, 1967

*Black L in the Labor Movement*



Wayne State University  
Detroit, Michigan

Interview  
of  
SNOW GRIGSBY

by

Roberta McBride  
March 12, 1967

Archives of Labor History  
and Urban Affairs  
Wayne State University  
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- M: I am now interviewing Mr. Grigsby, and I'm asking him about his many experiences here in Detroit fighting the good fight. Mr. Grigsby, when did you come to Detroit and from where?
- G: I came to Detroit in 1923 from Chatsville, South Carolina, Newberry County.
- M: And why did you come to Detroit?
- G: I came to Detroit looking for employment, as I had been told by other students who worked in Detroit in the summer, that it was a good place to come for employment and how rosy things were.
- M: Did you find this rosiness that you expected?
- G: I did not. After I was here a very short time I was disillusioned and disappointed.
- M: In what way?
- G: I found there were positions paid out of public funds, but Negroes didn't even have jobs in most departments - not even token jobs. It was complete misinformation which had been given to me, and I ran into discrimination right in the Detroit Institute of Technology where I entered school. It was a requirement that you must take a course in physical education. The other students would go in the gym, central branch, YMCA, under whose auspices the college operated. I was not allowed to go. I was told I would have to go down to the St. Antoine branch and take gym there - it was a Negro Branch.
- M: How long did that practice continue? Do you know when they stopped that?
- G: They stopped it in less than a year at that particular branch. But it was not stopped without a fight. I had to take it to a lawyer before the power structure of the YMCA to get it changed.
- M: It looks as if you learned a lesson from that - for you have used power ever since then as a force to secure your rights?
- G: Well, I learned my lesson that you have to have facts and figures to present your cause, and I thought one of the best ways, especially in these public institutions maintained by public funds was to see what the budget was, how many employees they had, and how many of them were from minority groups - I mean by that, were Negro.
- M: So that after you got out of DIT almost immediately you went to work, where the opportunity existed?
- G: I did. For example I made some research work on the following institutions: Board of Education, City Treasurer's Office, Library, Street Railway Department, Receiving Hospital, Herman Keifer Hospital, Fire Department. This was in 1933; I made a little survey, then published a pamphlet, "X-Ray Survey of Detroit," which broke down these

figures in all these categories, and then I presented it to the public.

- M: Could you give us an example of any one of them - say the Board of Education - as to the number of Negroes who were employed?
- B: The Board of Education had at that time been incorporated 91 years. They had on their payroll 10,183 employees, and 72 of those were Negroes.
- M: What kind of positions were those?
- G: 50 teachers, and 22 janitors, but, going on a per cent basis, according to our population, we were entitled to 820 jobs, which we were entitled to have, going in the same proportion as our percentage of population, and after presenting these figures and organizing through the late Reverend William H. Peck of the Detroit Civic Rights Committee, in the year 1933 we organized to move forward.

It was slow, but we gradually worked up a public program to be held at various churches, brought in various speakers, and we would highlight these jobs. It might be interesting to you to know that when we approached the Board of Education and sent a letter to the Superintendent, Frank Cody, he ignored the letter, and after 30 days we sent another registered letter to Mr. Cody with a return receipt. They couldn't say they had not received it. So we finally got an audience with this Board.

Before going before this Board we worked out a brief the same as a lawyer would in a courtroom. In this brief we showed that in 91 years they hadn't hired but 72 Negroes, and when we began to question the Superintendent and the Board members with whom we had the audience the Superintendent said they hadn't hired anyone for several years during the depression, hadn't even hired a sub. But in the meantime we had sent letters to the presidents of all the state schools in the state of Michigan, and had sent this type of letter: "We understand that the graduates of your school have a good representation as being employees of the Board of Education. How many have you placed in the last year? And what schools are they working for?" And from the answers we compiled a list of how many they had hired. We also notified Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the president of Howard University, and also the president of Fiske University, and told them we were trying to break a barrier. They told us that if we could break a barrier they would give up any man they had on the faculty to help us out. While in this discussion with the Board and the Superintendent, and they said they hadn't hired any and after Reverend Peck, who was one of the spokesmen, mentioned the fact we didn't have a single counselor, not a single head, not a head in the music department, a truant officer, not even a clerk-typist, and the question Reverend Peck placed before them was that someone had failed, because they were turning people out every year in these fields. So if they hadn't found a Negro to fill those posts, someone had failed.



Well, in the meantime, Mr. Cody - they asked him about this employment, and he said they hadn't hired anybody. When he took his seat we pulled out this list to unravel what they had had, and it was kind of embarrassing. Then, a member of the Board of Education got up and said they had scanned the list at Wayne University and they didn't find anybody qualified to take a job, and the meeting got pretty hot. So, in the meantime, we had sent letters to 15 colleges and universities throughout the country, and had asked them to give us occupational credentials of Negro men and women prepared to teach in the various fields and when they called on me I pulled out a stack out of my brief, and the meeting was getting very warm, and a smart member of the Board said, "We could debate this question all day and all night," but they weren't getting anywhere and they were asking Mr. Cody to meet with the Committee, and if they had people qualified that they would hire. To our surprise we got 19 jobs that day, and within a year the Board hired almost a hundred, whereas before they hadn't hired one a year in the past 91 years.

For example, we brought a Negro man from Fiske by the name of Mr. Lloyd Cofer who was a counselor at Miller, and then went on to Wayne. He already had his Master's at Tufts, and he went on and got his doctorate at Wayne, and is now the principal at MacKenzie High School, and also the chairman of the Board at Michigan Central College, and will head all the programs which are coming up for their centennial next year.

- M: I had been told that you had done more than any other individual to desegregate the Detroit school system, and now I understand why I was told that. Did you have any other luck like that? I would call that amazingly good results.
- G: Yes, that was good results, because they hired Dr. Horace Bradfield. Dr. Bradfield is a practicing physician. He was an attendance officer for awhile, and then went back into the field of medicine. And the first boy who got to be a clerk, he's an assistant principal now, Billups, with the Detroit Board of Education. I can name employee after employee who has come along that line.
- M: Would you say that your success was due to persistence, but also to good homework you had done?
- G: Fact-finding, to present your facts. You cannot go behind facts. They will give you a lot of alibis and reasons, but facts will stand up.
- M: I judge, by the array of pamphlets you have shown me, some your own work, some from the Civic Rights Committee, that that has been a consistent practice of yours down through the years, always to have the facts. Now your Civic Rights Committee lasted for how long?
- G: It lasted, I guess, around eight to ten years. It disbanded then.
- M: Your continuing effort was always economic? You tried to get jobs?

- G: We based it on economics, because we found this: it's not worth anything to be able to go in one of your finest places and sit down to eat, if you don't have the price of a meal. We figure the first thing is to have the job, and other things will automatically follow. Because you will find that the only thing that America respects today is the dollar and the vote.
- M: And you started when the dollar meant a great deal more than it does today - in 1933.
- G: You're right - everybody was in the soup line and the bread line.
- M: Did you have trouble getting operating funds to print these publications?
- G: We did. But people got interested in them, and they would give dimes, nickles, and quarters. But to make a long story - to show you how we gathered some money, if you will let me refer to our fight to get people on at Edison.
- M: You say that you have a record there you would like to tell about?
- G: Yes. For instance. The Detroit Edison Company is a public utility. Negroes at this time comprised 8.7 percent of the population of the city. The Detroit Edison Company operated 650,000 meters in the city. Nine and four tenths per cent of these meters, or 61,000 meters are in Negro homes and business places. Out of a total of 8,500 people employed by the Detroit Edison, only 40 jobs are held by Negroes. This is less than one half of one percent, or, to be exact, less than .47 per cent.
- M: What was the time of this publication?
- G: Around September of 1939.
- As of that time, these figures were true. I quote, "We comprised 8.7 per cent of the population, we used 9.4 per cent of the meters. We should have had about 800 jobs instead of 40. From the many light bills tabulated, to date, we find that the average Negro light bill is \$3.19. On 61,000 meters this would be \$194,000 per month, or \$6,460 per day. How many meter-readers or other employees would this pay? Incident to our research we find that Cincinnati has a 100 kilowatt rate of \$2.50 to all users. The Detroit Edison Company rate is \$3.38. Why the difference? They are milking white and Negro users of nearly 6 million dollars annually. How many Negroes ever read your meter? How many Negroes waited on you as you paid your bill? Wake up, Negro Detroit, and enlist in the fight. Mail one of your 1938-39 electric bill receipts to our tabulating office." Now, this might be interesting to you. You asked, a while ago, how we financed this. We paid high school students a penny per light bill. We went from door to door. We had it announced in churches, to give us a light bill, particularly a January bill which had all the Christmas lights on it. You know that would be heavy, because in the middle of the winter you used more light. And, our people whom we had working in the field - these students - we had them tell us their experi-



ences going from door to door. They would tell us in so many places they were told they wanted to know too much. If they approached the lady, or a man, they would say we wanted to know too much about their business. A husband may not want you to give a light bill. And when they came back and reported all of this to us, we worked out a little speech, very short, and to the point. We said, "If you see a mother, and you asked her, and she didn't want to give you the light bill, you say to her, 'Has a Negro ever been to your house to read the meter? Has a Negro girl ever been behind the counter or to enter it in the ledger book that you had paid your bill? Has the thought ever occurred to you that all Negroes cannot be lawyers and doctors or nurses or school teachers? We have to have some office employees. Now you have a child there. There might be a job for him.'" After that talk people began to crumble. People began to mail bills in. People began to bring them to church. It began to push us to pay for them. And that's how we collected 61,000 light bills and tabulated them, and got our figures. And the funny part about it was when we got our audience with the Edison Company, we took down a committee of a very cross-section, Daisy Lampkin went with us - she used to be at the NAACP - we had our local president of the NAACP, we had members of the Civic Rights Committee, we had doctors, lawyers, undertakers, a little of everything, preachers, - if we needed someone to pray, we had them. If we needed someone to curse a little, we had them. We had a cross-section for anything that could happen. But the fun part was when we mentioned all the money that Negroes paid, the spokesman for the Edison Company pounded the desk and almost said, but he caught himself, "You don't have access to our books, you don't know what's the thing." We said, "Wait, we have the other side of your ledger-sheet." So we had boys on the outside of the meeting place with boxes of these light bills and then we gave someone the end of the adding machine tape and let them walk across the room. It took 32 feet of adding machine tape to add up what Negroes paid in one day, and that was the breaking down of getting Negroes into Edison.

M: What results came from this?

G: We have them working in different departments for Edison now. They have quite a record now, but they have changed, they have changed. Some times you have to put it in terms they can see, that the color of a man's skin doesn't keep him from thinking.

M: It looks to me as if you not only had your facts, but that you presented them with a dramatic flair - walking across the room with a strip of adding machine tape!

G: To wake up our people to this we held a meeting with Dr. Lloyd Imes, the president of Knoxville College. He came and we had all these figures about employment on a big canvas, and we had it rolled up. And when we got the audience seated - with several thousand people in old Ebenezer Church on the corner of Brush and Willis, we pulled a string and let the curtain fall - and there all the figures were. It gave the audience a visual, vivid picture. And from that day it made it easier for us, the Civic Rights Committee, in anything we tried to do in meaningful avenues for jobs.



- M: To me, it looks as if you had a double purpose. You wanted to awaken the Negro community as to what they could do if they got together, and you presented the picture. And you were confronting employers. Now, at that time you weren't attempting very much in the way of political activities? Did you endorse candidates or anything like that?
- G: That gradually grew in because we had an election, and we pointed out - we had a pamphlet to show how many people voted, what judges, this was on the courts - we showed various sentences, how many Negroes, how many whites - in the probation department where they didn't hire Negroes. It was still related to economics, jobs. Our whole picture was economic, through the whole life of the Committee.
- M: What kind of work did you do with the NAACP? I've seen your name many times in connection with that.
- G: I was just a leg man to go out and solicit memberships, and I'm still a dyed-in-the-wool NAACP man. Of course, I'm a life member.
- M: Good for you. How come you worked through the Civic Rights Committee, rather than through the NAACP?
- G: I had a freer hand in this. I wasn't tied down. You see, the program of the NAACP is - you have to go through so many different channels, and you have to observe national policy. We made our own policy here; it was local.
- M: Now, were there any other committees like this Civic Rights operating in the U.S., of which you know?
- G: Not that I know of, not like us. Because we had people from all over sitting in with us to get information. Every public meeting we had - we had these meetings, called forums, with a question period. I can tell you - would you be surprised to know that when we brought Dr. Mordecai Johnson here to speak, in the depression before the CIO was organized, Dr. Johnson was kind of branded as a tool of the Administration? There was a grapevine all over town that if he spoke at any Negro church, if there were any members working in any of the factories, they would be fired, or laid off. We could not even get any church for Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University. But I succeeded in getting Brewster Auditorium, the gym, to hold this meeting, and when the power structure found out that we were going to have a meeting there, they tried to make the Recreation Department cancel it, but there had just been a headline that the then-head of the Recreation Department was going to lose his job - some man from the University of Michigan was going to be given it. So we told this man not to cancel it, and we would lead the fight down at City Hall to hold his job, that we would march on the Council. So he didn't. But the next thing was, we had the place, but how were we going to get chairs enough in there? Finally we found chairs somewhere, and there was such a rumpus about it they canceled the rule on having to pay for the chairs in there, but Mordecai Johnson, his subject was, "Our Liberty and Our Freedom," and he spoke for an hour and forty

minutes, and you could have heard a pin fall.

- M: The troubles you ran into with that particular meeting - was that typical of what happened other times?
- G: That was about the roughest we had. I was a little afraid for him, for things were a little rough back then about organizing. But Dr. Mordecai Johnson, he delivered that speech.
- M: When your Committee went out of existence in 1941 we were just going into the war. How come you didn't feel that you needed the Committee any longer?
- G: It was not that we felt we didn't need the Committee any longer. But here was something that happened. There was a lot of pressure being brought to bear on this type of Committee, especially on the head, because we were insisting on some things, as housing. In disbanding the Civic Rights Committee, I got into something else a little better and broader. I became national editor of the POSTAL ALLIANCE, which circulates all over the United States and goes to every public official in Washington, and every elected official in Congress. I had a wider group and more contacts than I ever had here in Detroit, to get the job done. My fight has been transferred not only from the city, but also to the government employees.
- M: So, through the union you have been able to carry on -
- G: Carry on, only under a different name. I can furnish you documents to show employment along the same line as in the city, but in the U.S...
- M: Mr. Grigsby, you have told me of a number of political activities aimed at getting more Negro employment - as judges who employed Negroes in their offices. Did you ever get to the point where you worked directly to get Negroes in office?
- G: Yes. We worked to get Attorney William Patrick, we worked to get Diggs in. We worked to make Negroes conscious that we needed representation on the Common Council - we worked to get re-districting, and to try to go back to the ward system, because we found, in an election, that councilmen lived way out in areas and too far away from the people to know what they wanted. They knew nothing about the dirty alleys, and the streets not kept up and things of that nature. We find that several of the Councilmen live in the same ward, and very few Negroes live in that ward; but no Councilman down in the inner city where one is really needed. We tried many years ago to get this set up in wards, but people didn't go for it. But it aroused people to the point where we knew we were not getting a fair deal from the City Council because it was the City Council and some people years ago saw it coming that when people would migrate to Detroit in large numbers, and if we had the ward system, we would have enough in there who would have some voice in the Common Council.
- M: Now, a group worked for this just last year, didn't they - the



Wolverine Bar Association?

G: The Wolverine Bar Association initiated a petition to go back to the old system, but the people fought it - the power structure. But one thing, we made the Negroes conscious of this because we published a pamphlet, and these were the figures we gave out to show how little representation we had: "Cold facts the political power structure never emphasized: Elected positions in the city and county government. The city, one mayor - no Negro. One city clerk, no Negro. Nine councilmen, no Negro. Judges, ten - one Negro. Traffic Court, Recorder's Court, two judges, no Negro. Total of 24 elected positions in the city of Detroit, and only one Negro. Now the County. Clerk, no Negro. Circuit Court Commission, four - no Negro. Judges, nine - two Negroes. Common Pleas Judges, six - no Negroes. Probate judge, none. Judges in the Circuit Court, twenty. At that time there was none. Auditor, three - none. Road Commission, one - no Negroes. Prosecuting Attorney, one - no Negro; Drain Commissioner, one - no Negro; Register of Deeds, one - no Negro. Sheriff, one - no Negro. Treasurer, one - no Negro; Total, of the 49 elected county positions. Combined total, of the city and county elected positions city 24, county 49, total 73, of that total we have three Negroes of the total of 73." Now, by arousing Negroes, you have a Negro elected on the Circuit Court, you have a Negro in the Common Pleas Court, you got three judges in Recorder's Court, and one traffic referee, but not a judge. And that's one place we need more representation, in Traffic Court. Now, here are some figures which might also interest you: Appointment by the Mayor in a three-year period, whites, the Mayor appointed 238, 93%; Negroes 18, which is 7%; the total payroll for the 256 appointees is over \$600,000 annually.

M: There is still some work to be done?

G: There is still work to be done, because all of these eighteen who were appointed, some of these are to commissions which pay no salary, and you know honorary jobs never ring a cash register. The Negro still hasn't moved up far enough to afford these honorary jobs, because he still has to go back and earn a living to feed his family.

M: I'm real interested, also, Mr. Grigsby, in some of your publications. Now that I'm here seeing you this afternoon, I see a whole card-table full, stacked about as deeply as it could be, of the pamphlets and publications you have brought out. I was quite interested in one, published in about 1963, "We Can Be Proud," telling the accomplishments of Negroes. What was your object in doing this?

G: My object in doing this - your daily press and your magazines are very good at portraying crime, but the more substantial things they omit. They go more at portraying the sensational things. Negroes have made quite a contribution to literature, and to inventions and so forth, but that is never mentioned. I was invited by the St. John's Presbyterian Church to make a speech and to give an exhibit of rare historical documents a year before this speech was to be made; but after doing the research work it was too much not to put in print. I often laugh and say that's one speech that cost me several hundred dollars



to make, because I had a tremendous printing bill, because after I made the speech I gave out copies in schools all across the country. People sent for them, and I gave them out. Since then, I have had to have reprints made because I've been invited to talk to students, and I never like to go before students without giving them something tangible they can take home with them. One of the things I was glad to write down was of some of the Negroes and their contributions in the fight for freedom, those who were advocates of social justice; in the economic sphere, social science, what Negroes accomplished abroad, and musicians. If we could only get this message across to the general public and especially to our white students, you can go and name every musician from Damrosch to Paderewski, all down through the ages, down to modern times to your jazz artists, not a single one would ever tell you that there had ever been a symphony written, by playing on white keys only on the piano, but whenever you reach up and tickle a black key along with the white, you get harmony, you get music and something soothing to the ear. And if this life is going to be productive for everybody and good will for everybody, there must be a symphony on all levels, not only in music, using some of these black people sprinkled along to get something soothing, harmonious, in this troubled world. I would like, also, to mention a little something about our inventors.

M: I have something to say there. Someone was telling me the expression, "The Real McCoy," referred to a Negro inventor named McCoy.

G: Elijah McCoy was a Detroitier. He invented - you have been down to the railroad station and have seen a man come along and use a long oil can to oil the wheels. He is the man who invented the cup on there so you wouldn't have to do that - the cup which is automatic on your big motors and in your electric plants. He is the man who invented the automatic means for oiling without it. And it is too bad that the man who had the brilliancy he had, and how his inventions were used - he died a pauper and was buried in potter's field out in Eloise.

M: He didn't get credit for his inventions? Didn't derive money from them?

G: There are a lot of men who didn't get credit or money for their inventions. Look at Dr. Carver. Dr. Carver discovered and invented so many things but how much did he get out of it? They were brought up by big corporations - the sound board that you hear, that makes the music bounce in your radio or your TV - that was discovered by Dr. Carver. You don't hear about those things. I know a man who invented something here less than two years ago.

M: What was that?

G: Something to help handle mail. So far, he hasn't got one penny. But he was invited to take a booth at the New York World's Fair where this machine had been patented.

M: By whom? Is that another story?



- G: That's in the works now, and the story isn't finished yet. Now for another thing, lots of people sit down to play a game of cards but they don't realize that the folding chair they are sitting on was invented by a Negro.
- M: I have four antique folding chairs I'm real proud of. Maybe they were invented by this man - or at least the process was.
- G: I've got the patent number of these inventions, so if anyone doubts, I can show them. You know, so many people are from Missouri on matters like these. I thought it was a nice thing to list them. And it would help some child to hold up his head to know that some of his ancestors made a contribution, and it would make another child have a little more respect to know there is no monopoly on brains. No one race has a monopoly on brains.
- M: That rather fits in with the idea that we should celebrate Negro History the year around rather than one week.
- G: While getting all this together, I thought it would be a nice idea to list all Negroes who had been elected or appointed judges in the United States. It does something to a person when he walks into a court and can see one of a race who has been crushed or held down, holding a position to mete out justice. I also listed in this little pamphlet, "Of This We Can Be Proud," a place where you can get a pamphlet on Negro History where we would find there are 1,090 books written by Negro authors, and a catalog where they can be obtained, in order that a person could fill his library or whatever other purpose he wanted.
- M: What I was so happy to find was that a number of those books are out in paperback editions now, so that one could go out and buy five or ten very interesting accounts. I've been reading them, one by one. Mr. Grigsby, we were talking about involving Negro people in politics. Is it really very important that Negro people vote?
- G: It is extremely important that every Negro vote count. A lot of people think, "I'll stay away from the poll - my vote couldn't matter." But I'm going to give you some figures to show that one vote really counts. Well, one vote had a lot to do with lots of things that happened in this country. Thomas Jefferson was elected president by one vote in the electoral college; so was John Quincy Adams. Rutherford B. Hayes was elected by one vote. His election was contested, and it was referred to an electoral college, and he again won by one vote.
- M: That was the famous election, was it not, which turned back the tide of history?
- G: Right. The man who cast the vote for Hayes was a Congressman from Indiana, a lawyer who was elected to Congress by a margin of just one vote. And that one vote was cast by a client of his who fought desperately when ill and insisted that he be taken to the polls. By just one vote there came into the Union the states of California,

Idaho, Texas and Oregon and Washington. That's a big chunk of territory, and today all the people living in those states are Americans by just one vote. In Michigan - let's talk about places close at home - in Michigan - elections are lost or won in Wayne County. In 1950, the gubernatorial election was won by 1,154 votes which was less than one vote per precinct in Wayne County. In 1952 the election was won by less than five votes per precinct. Now you say that one vote situation applies to the past. Well, don't forget that the Draft Act of World War II passed the House by just one vote. You can carry this one-vote history on and on. For example, one additional vote in the Democratic primary in each of Ohio's one thousand eight hundred precincts in 1944 would have defeated Mr. Taft in 1948. One more additional Republican vote in each of the precincts would have carried the state for Mr. Dewey instead of Mr. Truman. Who says one vote does not count? Food for thought: the Negro population in the city of Detroit - 482,273; percent of population at that particular time - 28.9 (it is much higher now). Average income for a Negro family at that time was \$4,300. The average annual income for Negro families is \$2000 less than that of other racial groups. In Detroit proper Negroes constitute 86.3% of the buying market, and are the largest buyers of ready-to-cook food. You see, a lot of these figures you don't see in your daily papers.

- M: I was reading through one of your publications. You told of when Reverend Charles Hill ran as a candidate for Common Council, and the number of votes by which he was defeated. It was much less than the number of Negroes who stayed home - who were registered but who just didn't get out to vote.
- G: That was one of the things we were trying to show when we told how one vote counts. Negroes have to be made conscious. I will tell you this: this story applies to getting people out to vote. Down in Georgia, at a medical school a doctor wanted to show the psychological effect of telling the person the same thing, if you told it long enough. At twelve different places they deposited a package, and sent a young man around to pick it up. They had posted the people to say something about his looks. At the first place one said, "Your eyes look a little red." At the next place they said, "Are you sick? You look a little peaked." And on and on; everyone had something different to say and by the time he got to the twelfth place, the man fell out. We have got to continue telling people the importance of the vote, and how it looks when he does not vote, and maybe some day it is going to sink in, because we see now what is happening in Congress because if we don't vote we will soon be living in a thoroughly frustrated world.
- M: That's certainly true. I think a little bit the same principle applies toward listing of Negro accomplishments. It will make the rest of us feel a little greater by hearing of these things.
- G: Well, here is something now, since we have just mentioned Congress. I'll walk over here to a file. I do not condone any wrong doing by anyone, whether in Congress or otherwise. We have heard so much about Adam Clayton Powell - of him, of his work in heading the Labor



and Education Committee. And when you put all these bills, like medicare, and free lunch programs for children throughout the U.S., education bills, and many others to which he had strings as regards discrimination, and when we had all these grants that go back to the states, and for these different purposes, it totals 14 billion dollars, but you don't read much about that in the papers.

M: You mean Adam Clayton Powell is responsible for getting that amount of federal aid?

G: For the bills he got through.

M: I have a feeling we will be having a publication from Mr. Snow Grigsby shortly about that.

G: Well, I just haven't found the time to put it together but I do have a complete set of the facts here.

M: Let's do take a quick, running look at the things you have published. It seems to me that "Taps or Reveille," which is in most of the libraries, is one of your better known. What is the significance of the title?

G: The significance of the title, "Taps or Reveille": any man who has been in the army knows that reveille, the bugle blowing in the morning means, "Get up and get busy, or else you're going to be buried." One of the reasons which made me anxious to publish this - I was on a panel at a workshop conducted at Tennessee State University. I was on a panel about public relations. Those students can ask you a lot of questions. I posed one to them in turn, "Can you name all the Negroes who had been elected to the United States Congress? They couldn't even name the ones who were in Congress at that time. I thought it was necessary to go and dig up the information. It was just a young fellow - though I hold no brief for him, he was a fine kid - that was one of my reasons for listing a little bit about what we hear so much these days, about Mr. Brooks being elected to the Senate. Why, we had two senators elected to the Senate from Mississippi. And they robbed them and stole the election, so I printed what the vote was, and showed it in there. And one of the other things was, people were excited when they had the march in Montgomery, Alabama. I thought some of those things should be brought together.

You have two sets of pictures in here. The pictures are of Negro senators and representatives, and then of Negroes who have been elected to state house and senate positions in South Carolina. That particular time when this book was published, those pictures were seventy-nine years old. These were the Negroes who started the public school system in South Carolina, and not a word of the law was changed for 18 years. Yet, just since the Supreme Court System, have Negroes begun to get in the University system in South Carolina.

M: Then you had one pamphlet, I haven't read it through, "White Hypocrisy and Black Lethargy,"

G: I published that back in 1937. It might interest you to know it was very controversial; because a man down on the streets selling this pamphlet so I could pay off the printer - every white man who saw it was amazed at that fellow who was calling him a hypocrite, and each Negro said, "Who's that fellow who was calling me lazy?"

M: What did you have reference to?

G: The real reference was this, we find so much hypocrisy among public officials, and we find so much lethargy among Negroes. And I was wanting to publish this to wake them up and make them see the picture as it really presents itself in everyday life.

M: Now, if you were to go back, and to start over again in this period or the early 30's, is there any action you would change? It looks to me as if you have gotten very good results from your activities. Have you learned any lessons, do you think?

G: I have learned a lot of lessons. I have learned to be a good listener, and by listening, then trying to get the facts, you can make a much better approach on anything you're trying to attack. But now, in this day of so much civil rights fighting, you find so many people just jumping out there because they can get the publicity and the headlines, which is wrong, because so many of them are just being used as stooges rather than people who are conscientious.

M: So you would say we can't be thinking too much of our own self-glory?

G: The people who would go out and lead a fight for others - he will never get anything but a hard name, he is an outcast as far as the power structure is concerned, and also from some of those who are benefitting from his fight. But a man who is a soft-soaper and who plays both sides of the fence and the man who never rumples the feathers of anyone, and who always rubs the fur the right way, in other words, the one who never upsets anything at the tea party -

M: He's the one who gets -

G: He is the one who gets the jobs, not the one who leads the fight.

M: The first time I heard your name, Mr. Grigsby, I was new in Detroit, and you were running for Council. I heard that, "Four and no more," and I was afraid I was up against a Black Nationalist who didn't want any part of white people, but I was mistaken?

G: You were mistaken. There is something here we have to differentiate. We have fellows here who work for a union, and they do what their boss tells them to do. Now you remember how all that stuff preceded the "Four and No More," that "liberal coalition." All right, what happened to this liberal coalition, no sooner did he get your vote, he used it as a stepping stone to move over to Records Court, from a \$17,500 to a \$29,000 job. Another of those councilmen, he left to go from a \$17,500 to a \$25,000 job. He used all that and tried to get some Negroes to help sell the idea. But you see, Negroes know, they're



getting wise to that type Negro. Now they have to have another election for the city. How much is that going to cost? \$300,000? So someone has gone out there and sold the people a bill of goods. Those people are what you might say, opportunists. And the taxpayers are carrying the load. Yet some guy who is a bigshot in labor union will get up and try to sell this idea, "We must have a coalition." I have looked at the way people voted in every precinct, and it really makes me sick that some people will sell someone right down the river if it is going to give them a headline in the daily paper, that he's a great leader.

M: Now you're talking about the opportunists, who use everything to their own advantage? But you're not saying, still, that we can't have white-Negro coalitions?

G: You can have white-Negro coalitions. It's got to work both ways, because when it's just working one way it's no good. It's got to be a two-way street, one-way is no good.

M: Your "four and no more" was really to force that two-wayness, wasn't it?

G: To force it two ways, rather than just one way. But you can see who got the benefit. All the rest of us didn't get anything, just got at the polls, because when we went to the polls to vote.

M: What do you look at as our immediate problems, at which we have a chance of succeeding? What we should we be doing now?

G: We've got to involve churches in the activities of the community everyday through the week, not just on Sunday. We've got to become involved in the economic problem, in housing; some day, when time permits we'll go into this matter of housing, in which I have been very interested. The church can become one of the major institutions. The church has been too solid. All the church has been, "Go to heaven when you die. You can walk those streets of gold." They haven't been concerned with the fellow who walks the streets here with no shoe soles. They don't think about the man who is thinking about where he is going to get the money to buy a loaf of bread, or milk, or shoes for his wife, or clothes for his children to go to school. We've got to worry about our everyday living, and not after we are dead.

M: So the church must take on those economic concerns?

G: The church must take on those economic concerns for the whole city if we're going to make any progress, because this one-day operation won't solve anything.

M: You still rely on your union, too, do you not?

G: Yes, as one of the agents. There's a big job to be done by our labor unions. I could tell you some things about labor unions that would make the hair stand on your head.

M: You mean that there is both good and bad to be said about unions?

G: Both good and bad. They have done a lot of good, but there are a lot of bad things, because there is a lot going on right now in Congress. Lots of people don't know Adam Clayton Powell, how unions are involved in calling shots from behind the scenes.

M: I guess I'm one of those who is not too sure. I intend to come back and see you another time about the union, and you must tell me about that at the same time. Now, I want to thank you very much for the hour in which you told me about your activities here. You do feel as if you have accomplished something in your life, don't you? It certainly sounds to me as if you have.

G: It's a consolation to know you have helped somebody.