

Interview with Davis, A. G.

Not in Who's Who - Vice President in charge of Patent Department. Met him at lunch where I was delighted with the exchange between him and Whitney. Evidently a man who keeps himself firm, in form, by his interest in literature - the drama. Great reader, was familiar with the scientific discussions, Eddington, Einstein, new book on The Mystery of The Universe. Talked of plays, contribution in conversation to continuity of employment - strong individualist.

I ask him what he thinks of the contributions of Young to G.E. He says it is in what the man is. He analyzes him this way:- First, power of making quick decisions and sticking to them. Says that ~~when you assume character~~, all men of achievement have this power in common, like Wilson (Woodrow Wilson) MacAdoo, Theodore Roosevelt. Says this is a dangerous thing if a man is not right at bottom. Comments that Westinghouse had it <sup>I am not</sup> quite clear whether he meant that Westinghouse was not right at bottom or not.

Second, his <sup>ys</sup> smile - worth a million dollars, because of what it represents.

Third, "his greatest quality, I found out many years ago, that is, his power in negotiation. He always finds out what the other fellow wants. Finds out what the other fellow must have and gives it to him. Does not pay much attention to what he asks for. People coming to a negotiation always set their demands above what they know they must have. to go on. They trim these down. Young has an uncanny knack in negotiations of finding out what are the essentials each must have. He separates this from what they are asking.

Referred to Dawes Committee. Davis, who was in Paris, was asked to carry a message to Young to the effect that Germany could never pay

what France was asking, but evidently Young was not concerning himself <sup>with</sup> what France was asking, but with finding out what she had to have and what Germany could pay and ought to. Says his first big relation with Young was in Detroit. Does not tell me what the case is, but that there he found out the man's ingenuity and secrets behind his success. Says that the adjustment of the radio situation was much more difficult than the Dawes Committee. Here he followed his great rule - what every fellow had to have. The necessities were so great, as in the Dawes case, that trade was not possible. He had to be even ingenious in making out compromises. He really wanted to give each person what he knew he must have - not what he was asking. That it was a work of adjusting relations. If I understood him he says that in 1915 the Research Laboratory had been busy on radio. Here <sup>Alexander</sup> Langmuir turned out something, I do not understand what. They made a contract before the war with the Marconi Company. They cancelled this Marconi contract. The Navy tried out their inventions at Brunswick - instant improvement in radio tubes under ~~Langmuir~~ <sup>A</sup>. Tested this in their laboratory. Davis speaks of them as boys. They allowed them to go on with these investigations, though they were not in radio themselves. When the war came on they began to manufacture for the Navy - when the war was ended they were highly skilled in radio broadcasting, because of what ~~Langmuir~~ <sup>Alexander</sup> had done. But others had been experimenting. The patents were hopelessly entangled <sup>since</sup> -/everybody had thrown all that they made into the Government's hands. Seemed to be a hopeless situation. "Boys full of ideas and couldn't carry them out - very restless."

Things in each country began to settle themselves back into the old situation. - British Marconi - business <sup>was</sup> entangling itself from war situations. American Marconi <sup>is</sup> in ~~this~~ <sup>here</sup> going ahead. Navy anxious. They want radio they can control. Says Buillard came to G. E. says that he does not want to make a contract with the Marconi Company - that they are a British subsidiary. In time of war we would have no absolute control of communications, both cables and radio would be under British. Dangers for Eastern situation. Wants G. E. to go into radio business - radio broadcasting <sup>desire</sup> in a completely American system. At the end of the war we had been talking for a year with France. Now is the time that all the great radio companies <sup>must</sup> dig in, something must be done to give us an independent line of communication.

Davis here speaks something about the relation of gutta-percha to all this. Don't understand what it is. Buillard says, "I want you to form an All-American Radio Corporation." Young said, "All right. We will go to it." Davis goes to Washington to clean up pacts. There seems to have been an idea in the Navy under Daniels that they should have an independent system, <sup>but</sup> that Young and Davis had gone <sup>too</sup> far. They had made promises to Buillard. So finally it was decided, as I understand it, at the Navy that these arrangements should be carried on. The first task was to get the <sup>Am</sup> British Marconi subsidiary out of the way. Davis went to Europe and bought this. As a matter of fact, only one-fifth of the American Marconi was owned in Europe. Sale was subject to the approval of the stockholders, which seemed to have <sup>been</sup> <sup>made</sup>. The first meeting of the Board of Directors Young was made Chairman.

Next matter was to get an arrangement with Tel & Tel. which controls patents absolutely essential. - no progress without. - what they had done in the War, as I understand it, and which had been used freely by all concerns under war necessities. Navy Department impatient in this block. They could not get tubes. They ordered Telephone and G. E. to get together. Davis says they were up against irreconcilable desires. Westinghouse was also a factor in the situation. Certain of their patents were necessary. It took three years of negotiation to get the thing cleaned up. Davis is enthusiastic over Young's part. I take it that he showed there the qualities that he laid down in the first part of our talk. Says ~~that~~ it was here that he said he was greater in these negotiations than he ever was in European and it was more difficult problems. At the end of three years, that is, in 1921 the radio system had been cleaned up in this country. He says the Government is now suing them for doing what it ordered them to do. (Look into this)

They found at the same time that this was going on, that there were enormous complications all over the world. This was particularly true, as I understand it, in South America, where there were no regulations. This piece of work in South America seems to be one of the outstanding achievements of Young in Davis' mind. He says what he did there was to establish a Monroe Doctrine in radio.

Davis says the one thing of which he is really proud in his life - the best contribution that he has ever made - was his part in setting up the Research Laboratory. As I take it, he and Steinmetz had discussed this. He talked to Rice about it, who said, "Go ahead."

Davis (Continued)

There seems to have been only one man that they wanted and that was Whitney.\* He tells how Whitney came down from Schenectady one cold day to meet him and Steinmetz at Steinmetz' house where he said, things were always very sketchy. S. & D. set out to impress Whitney with their high ideals, that this was something more than a commercial laboratory - that it was a laboratory for research - that there would be the freest opportunity and money to back it. Whitney was not sure he wanted to come, but finally said he would come for three days a week and full time in summers. Of course, this soon came to be full time the year around - so interesting for Whitney. Davis says his contributions are incalculable to human welfare in their results.

Says Whitney brought in Langmuir for pure research. There was an advisory board on research and the board questioned Whitney once about <sup>L's</sup> ~~all~~ contributions. He told them that L. would never do anything that would bring them money, that it was purely theoretical, entirely for scientific research, that they must <sup>not</sup> expect anything from it. They laughed and said, "Well, don't get hot, Whitney. That's all right, let him go ahead." He did go ahead and the <sup>new</sup> incandescent light is one result. He said something about it saving the country five hundred million dollars, as I understand.

Speaks of Dr. Coolidge's remarkable contributions. This is in the matter of the tungsten filament. He describes how tungsten was used - how filament was made. But do their best it was brittle they had great trouble in shipping lamps. The filament breaking with

\* See Hammond account - 8-1 attached

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

the least jar. Coolidge made remarkable experiments which resulted in a ductile filament. Davis emphasizes the importance of this. Coolidge received the Rumford medal in 1914 for this invention and <sup>application</sup> advocacy of ductile tungsten. (See Who's Who for his degrees and his medal.) He has been a member of the General Electric Laboratory since 1905 - its Director since 1908. When I remember his coming in to shake hands with me, tells me that he liked the "Life of Judge Gary." In the face of all his remarkable works I feel that I was not humble enough in his presence. He was so simple that I ~~really~~ think I should <sup>have</sup> ~~tried~~ to reassure him that I was not a great person! Coolidge was born in 1873. His name is William <sup>Tavil</sup> Nathan.