

Trench Interview

Trench came in to talk with me, towards the end of the day, after I had been working on the Hammond history. He knew Coffin gives an impression of a man who had cut his way up by persistent, compelling ^{push} ~~height~~ and personality. ^{says that} of Trench's ~~saction~~ on the Board ~~where~~ he would never allow a decision to be made until everybody had agreed. If there was someone who was opposed to the matter he would not give in - argue and wait until at last the opponent was worn out. Trench thought him ~~more~~ soft, but iron. If people were in his way he ^{move} ~~took~~ them out to save his purpose. There was a great determination ^{in him} to over-throw all resistance. ~~Says~~ (I might take up the case of Hugh McRae, talk with Y. about it.)

Case thinks Young is concerned with principles. Coffin was a man of action, so is Swope. Trench had one contact with Coffin which he tells me about. Coffin was an enthusiastic supporter of Herbert Hoover in ^{feeding} ~~treating~~ Belgium. When it was announced that he was to come here to take up the food administration Coffin told Young, they ought to make a survey of the food situation in America and have it ready for him when he arrived. O.D.Y. set Trench at this job. He says, "I knew nothing whatever about food, but for six weeks I worked as hard as I could. I really had a complete report ready when H.H. arrived." It was given to him at the ^{dock} I understand, and he read it on his way to Washington. I will be interested to know if Y. or anyone at the G.E. ever ~~had~~ heard about this again. I wager no. H.H. at that time, so far as my experience went liked to have people think he knew everything and could do everything.

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

An interesting story of Trench's coming with the G.E. In 1913 he graduated from St. Lawrence. Y. came into the G.E. that year - was at commencement. Trench was an honor man and though he does not say so, I think he made an impression by his *eloquence*? He met Y. at that time. Six months later, at a banquet in New York, where Y. was guest of honor, he went up and introduced himself. Y. said "What are you doing? We will have a place for you later."

Trench's sister told Y. that night ~~that~~ her opinion of a corporation lawyer. Is much amused by this - was the low-down opinion of the time, I take it. What my task should be is to find out really what kind of a corporation lawyer he was.

Two years later, Y. called Trench up, who was now studying law and asked him to come as his Secretary. T. says that was the most terrible year of his life - that first one. He was put down beside a man's mind like Y.'s. knowing absolutely nothing, obliged to feel his way at every step.

Trench is most interesting in his reflections on Young. Says he is a great philosopher - far-seeing - understands human beings. His story how he came into G.E. a little different than that of A.T. at Van Hornesville. He tells how Coffin had been attracted by his work for Stone & Webster in the suit against the G.E. Called him up from New York. He must have been at Van Hornesville at that time. He told Mrs. Young he did not want to see Coffin, that he could not give up - will have to clear up this confusion of where this thing occurred. And just how? According to A.T. he and his wife, with Mr. & Mrs. Young had gone to a Universalist Convention at ~~Fort~~ *F*ort Plain. They were late

nothing but a business meeting on. Y. said to A. T. that he would like to talk to him. Told him that Coffin wanted him to come to New York. Wanted him to go into the G.E. A.T. seems to have been very practical he said, "What will they give you, Owen?" But Owen did not know. Then as he told the story to me I said, "Owen, what did you earn last year?" He told me. Then I raised that considerably and ^Isaid you ought to ask them So and So, which was a good deal more than he had ever got. He thought it over, Mr. T. says, but he didn't say what he was going to do. Didn't speak ^{after} our talk, of the matter at all. until that night at dinner he suddenly said to Mrs. Young, "I am going to New York tonight - I'll be back tomorrow."

A.T. says when he came back he didn't say anything about the pay he was to get, only that he was going with them. A. T. never knew what the settlement ^{with Young} was only that later he told him that he was getting within a thousand of what he, A.T. had suggested.

Trench's story was a little different. He says that Coffin agreed to give him what he had been making in the year before. Y. said he would rather begin with less than any other Vice-President. Would not remain at that salary, nor would he expect to ask for an increase unless increases came according to what he was able to do. Mr. Coffin would find that ^{out} some morning ^{when} he did not come to his office. Trench says that Young has never asked for an increase. This story - the different version will have to be cleared up, and submitted to Trench or Young.