

Grover W. Ensley

Executive Director, Joint Economic Committee, 1949-1957

Technical Adviser to Senator Ralph E. Flanders, 1947-1949

Preface

by Richard A. Baker

In October 1955 *Nation's Business* reported, "Dr. Grover W. Ensley is staff director of what has been called the country's 'most important economic policy group. This is Congress' over-all Joint Economic Committee. The committee, which was formed in 1946, has been a major force in shaping American economic policy not only in Congress but in the [Eisenhower] Administration and business world as well. Its studies and publications are must reading among economists." The accomplishments of the Joint Economic Committee, in the decade following its creation, confirmed the goals of congressional reformers who had long sought to strengthen the quality and independence of expertise available to members of Congress. The need for coordinated economic planning to meet the challenges facing postwar America placed great opportunities before the joint committee. To address these challenges, the committee drew its mandate and staff resources from two landmark 1946 statutes, the Employment Act and the Legislative Reorganization Act.

In October 1946 newly appointed Senator Ralph Flanders (R-VT) offered Grover Ensley a staff position as economics specialist. Ensley was hesitant to work for a minority party senator, even one as well regarded as Flanders, recalling, "the Democrats had been in control of Congress since the late 1920s and this was the fall of 1946. I wanted to work with someone with power!" After consulting a pollster who correctly predicted that Republicans would capture Congress in the November mid-term elections, Ensley signed on with Flanders. He thus arrived on Capitol Hill at a time when Congress was seeking to expand its previously minimal professional staff resources. He brought impressive credentials to this environment literally proving to be "the right man in the right place at the right time."

Born on April 13, 1915 on a wheat ranch in eastern Washington, Grover Ensley worked his way through the University of Washington. There he earned a bachelor's degree in 1937 and a master's degree in business administration the following year. In 1940 Ensley earned a second master's, in government management, from the University of Denver. Upon graduation, Ensley moved to New York City and a position as research economist with the Tax Foundation, Inc. Completing his residency requirement for a Ph.D. in economics from New York University, he resettled in the nation's capital, taking a position as fiscal analyst with the United States Budget Bureau. In 1944 the Pabst Brewing Company sponsored an essay contest directed at finding solutions to the anticipated postwar employment crisis. The judges, sifting through thirty-six thousand entries, awarded prizes to seventeen essayists, including economists Herbert Stein, Leon Keyserling, and Grover Ensley.

In 1949 Dr. Ensley joined the staff of the Joint Economic Committee and quickly advanced to the position of Executive Director.

He held that post until 1957 when he left Congress to become president of the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks. His tenure on Capitol Hill coincided with a period of rapid growth in the size and functions of congressional staff. In the following interviews, with wit, clarity and insight, Grover Ensley provides an outstanding example of the imagination and productivity that senior staff brought to the multiple challenges of the post war era.

About The Interviewer: —Richard Allan Baker has been Director of the United States Senate Historical Office since its establishment in 1975. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, he received master's degrees from Columbia University and Michigan State University, and his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland, College Park. Prior to 1975 he worked as a specialist in American history for the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, and as Director of Research for the private Government Research Corporation. He is currently president of the Society for History in the Federal Government. His latest book is *Conservation Politics: The Senate Career of Clinton P. Anderson* (1985).