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Vernon Briggs: Real-World Labor Economist

Abstract
[Excerpt] Vernon Briggs stepped into a wastebasket and launched my career as a labor economist. In the spring of 1969, I was sleepwalking through the undergraduate economics program at the University of Texas and sitting in Dr. Briggs's labor economics class. He was vigorously making a point when his misstep off the small classroom stage produced a roar of laughter but did not break his train of thought. He woke me up; I thought, "Man, I want to be as passionate about my life's work as this guy.

Keywords
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Vernon Briggs: Real-World Labor Economist

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Vernon Briggs stepped into a wastebasket and launched my career as a labor economist. In the spring of 1969, I was sleepwalking through the undergraduate economics program at the University of Texas and sitting in Dr. Briggs's labor economics class. He was vigorously making a point when his misstep off the small classroom stage produced a roar of laughter but did not break his train of thought. He woke me up; I thought, "Man, I want to be as passionate about my life's work as this guy."[1]

When I earned an "A" in the course, not the dominant grade on my transcript at that time, Briggs sent a letter congratulating me and inviting me to visit during his office hours. This is the only such letter I ever have received in my academic career. When I did visit the next semester, conversations led to discussion of the graduate program at Michigan State University's School of Labor and Industrial Relations, and I was on my way.

My story is not unique. Briggs was an important influence on many students. Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin this chapter's discussion of his career by turning the clock back a bit and focusing on the people who had a significant influence on him. It was with this intent that I initiated a series of conversations with him in May 2007. We started with a discussion of his years as a student at the University of Maryland and Michigan State University, and then we focused on his work as a faculty member at the University of Texas and Cornell University. This chapter is based on those discussions (Curington 2007).

MARYLAND AND INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS

Briggs was born in 1937 in Washington, D.C., and grew up in the Washington suburbs of Silver Spring and Bethesda, Maryland. After high school, he enrolled in the College of Business and Public Administration at the University of Maryland, from which he received a bachelor's degree in economics in 1959. Asked to reflect on his undergraduate experience, Briggs focused on two economics professors whom he found "extremely influential," Dudley Dillard and Alan Gruchy.[2]

Dillard, who was chairman of the university's economics department at the time, taught Briggs's first economics course. It was a yearlong, first-year course on European and United States economic history. The course emphasized the rise of the market system and a historical perspective on the role of government, business, and labor.

Dillard's course indicated the importance of history as a part of the field of economics. "In many ways, economics should be guided by what historically has happened and does happen, not by what is theoretically supposed to happen," says Briggs, drawing on Dillard's core message. "Since then, I have always thought that the proper way to study economics is to take a year of economic history during your beginning year. Dillard was an enormous influence on my view that economics and history are linked."

Even more influential than Dillard was Alan Gruchy, with whom Briggs had three courses. Gruchy was an institutional economist, who introduced Briggs to "a great perspective" rarely found in economics departments these days. "The vital role that institutions play has almost been factored out of the equation in most economics courses—as has economic history." In Gruchy's "Comparative Economic Systems" course, Briggs was introduced to "a critical analysis of neoclassical, mainstream economics as well as of socialist and communist systems of economic organization."

In Gruchy's "Modern Economic Thought" course, Briggs was exposed to the institutionalist writings of Thorstein B. Veblen, John R. Commons, John M. Clark, Wesley C. Mitchell, Rexford G. Tugwell, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Clarence E. Ayres, all of whom were critical of mainstream economics due to "its predilection for theoretical,

abstract reasoning rather than dealing with real policy issues." The institutionalist perspective made an indelible impression on Briggs. "My career has been all about trying to apply economics to real issues and trying to deal with public policy responses."

In Gruchy's "National Economic Planning" course, Briggs studied the type of planning found in the Scandinavian market economies. "You can have free, civilized societies in which there is planning that sets priorities for an economy to achieve," says Briggs. "When you seek to set priorities, you really are planning. This perspective influences my thinking to this day."

In short, Dillard's course pointed Briggs in the direction of economics, while Gruchy's masterful teaching "locked in" his decision to major in the field. In the early 1990s, Briggs was asked to speak at memorial services for both professors. The remarks demonstrate the long-lasting influence of these two undergraduate influences (Briggs 1990, 1993). Reflecting on Gruchy, for example, Briggs wrote: "It was the power of his ideas, the breadth of his knowledge, and the manner of his delivery that held us in his sway—then and since" (Briggs 1990, p. 9).

MICHIGAN STATE AND LABOR ECONOMICS

Briggs became interested in labor economics after seeing thousands of unemployed people on a 1958 trip to his college roommate's hometown of Detroit, Michigan. They filled the sidewalk for several blocks in a wait to register for unemployment compensation. "Of all the areas of economics, I thought that labor issues were the most important because labor economics was the one area that most directly involved the welfare of human beings."

Dillard advised studying in Michigan, which would allow the chance to study near an industrial environment. "I had never been around big factories or unions or anything like that, so I applied to Michigan State University (MSU)." Briggs believes Dillard gave him excellent advice. "Part of the process of becoming a scholar is more than mastery of a technique and theory. It's beginning to have some genuine feeling for

the subject matter . . . I was able to begin to understand how big business, big labor, and big government functioned."

At MSU, Briggs had an "outstanding" doctoral committee. Charles Killingsworth, a professor of both economics and labor and industrial relations, served as the committee's chair. The other members were John Henderson, Abba Lerner, and Walter Adams. Henderson taught the history of economic thought, which Briggs sees as an essential area of study because it provides "the intellectual foundation" for the entire field. Lerner, a student of John Maynard Keynes and one of the great macroeconomists of the twentieth century, taught economic theory. Adams, "one of the most inspiring teachers you could ever imagine," taught industrial organization.

Briggs recalls that Lerner was "world-class" as both a theoretician and a professor. Lerner's classes were not a battleground for disputes between various schools of thought over the way the world actually operates. Instead, he offered philosophy-oriented courses that probed economic principles and assumptions. "All of his courses were like that—about a theoretical world of markets, economic decisions, and resource allocation. I had four wonderful graduate courses with him in macro- and microeconomics."

Adams coordinated the graduate program while Briggs was at MSU. He used the Socratic form of teaching, which gave him a reputation for being "rough and tough in class," but he also had a gentle heart. "The students could always tell he had our well-being first in mind."[3]

In addition to majoring in economics, Briggs had a minor field in twentieth century U.S. history with Madison Kuhn from the MSU history department. "I don't think economics doctoral students have a minor field anymore or, if they do, it would probably be in statistics or mathematics."[4] Consistent with the perspective he acquired as an undergraduate, Briggs explains his decision to study history as follows: "History is a check on theory in that it gives you real data and real events to try to explain . . . You deal with what actually happens when you have wars, plagues, oil boycotts, strikes, and all the kind of things that make studying economics so important and interesting to me."

It was a combination of Briggs's interest in public policy and some good fortune that led to Killingsworth becoming the chair of his dissertation committee. In the 1962–1963 academic year, when Briggs

was scheduled to take his doctoral exams and select his thesis topic, he was assigned to serve as Killingsworth's grading assistant. "That was probably the only time in his career that Killingsworth taught the economics department's introductory labor course for the whole year," says Briggs. "It was taught in a large lecture format of around 300 students in each of the fall, winter, and spring quarters." Briggs was the class's only graduate assistant.

Briggs recalls that Killingsworth's course was a blur between labor economics and industrial relations, which is the way all labor courses used to be taught in economics departments. "You were expected to know not just microeconomic theory pertaining to labor markets but also labor history, labor law, collective bargaining, and all of the institutional applications of public policy to the labor market."

The timing of the assignment to Killingsworth's course was fortunate because it came in the same year that the structural unemployment issue exploded onto the national agenda. The administration of President John F. Kennedy had proposed tax cuts to stimulate demand. Republican legislators vigorously opposed the cuts because they believed the result would be an unbalanced budget.[5] Killingsworth was the leading critic of the administration's tax-cut proposals from the left—not because he thought they could be harmful, just that they "were likely to be insufficient."

Killingsworth's criticism of the tax cuts stemmed from a concern over the effects of structural economic change associated with the coming of the computer, which he saw as having the potential to cause revolutionary labor-market changes. He argued that coping with such a major impact on labor markets would require policies to help the supply of labor adjust to the coming shift in demand for labor. The structural change that Killingsworth anticipated involved the demand for a more highly skilled and educated workforce, combined with fewer opportunities for unskilled, poorly educated workers.

In those days, "there were probably only 100 computers in the entire United States" and few students had even seen one.[6] Nevertheless, Killingsworth insisted that education, training, labor mobility, and antidiscrimination policies were crucial to dealing with the coming structural shift. "He was a 'real' supply-side economist," says Briggs.

Shortly after President Kennedy's assassination, the nation got both the tax cuts and employment policies. The latter—called manpower programs—were enacted as part of Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty." There was also federal aid to education, including the Elementary and Secondary School Act and the Higher Education Act. This federal involvement in education is often taken for granted today, "but these were enormous issues in the 1960s because there was no precedent for them."

In the midst of this major policy controversy, Briggs became well acquainted with Killingsworth and acquired valuable teaching experience. Regarding Killingsworth, Briggs recalls:

> The class was way down on the southern part of the campus, so I would meet him at the classroom before class and then he'd drive me back to the economics department after class. That gave us a chance to talk before and after class three times a week. It was an opportunity few graduate students have with their professor. So I got to know him quite well.

This relationship led to Killingsworth's supervision of Briggs's dissertation and provided the foundation for Briggs's teaching career:

> Over the course of the year, he had to miss several classes to testify or give advice to policymakers in Washington. On these occasions he would let me do the teaching. That's how I got started teaching a junior-senior-level labor economics course that incorporated many of Killingsworth's ideas. I would have to write the substitute lectures, but I knew what he wanted to be said.

Looking back, Briggs considers Killingsworth "a brilliant master of the issues of those changing times." Briggs explains:

> I think everyone now recognizes how the structure of the economy has changed so dramatically. The structural shift has been toward mounting employment in the service sector and a rapid decline in manufacturing and mining employment…Killingsworth was one of the first to predict this massive shift in the economy and to propose policy remedies. He was light years ahead of the profession, and I don't think he's ever gotten the credit that he deserves. He took a lot of criticism in those days, but by the 1970s, most people began to realize that he was right.

In time, economists, policymakers, and the public began to recognize "the importance of human resource policies as a necessary part of the nation's arsenal of economic policies."

Killingsworth's influence stuck with Briggs throughout his career. One stream of influence leads into the classroom: "Over the years, my students have heard a lot of Killingsworth's ideas, and they probably gave me a lot of the credit for things I learned from him firsthand." Another channel leads to professional service, especially Briggs's involvement in the National Council on Employment Policy. Killingsworth was an early member, along with labor economists such as George P. Shultz, John T. Dunlop, Ray Marshall, Juanita Kreps, and Eli Ginzberg. Briggs became an associate member of the Council in the late 1960s, along other young economists, including Michael Piore, Peter Doeringer, and Orley Ashenfelter. He became a full member of the Council in 1977 and served as chair of the organization from 1985 to 1987.

Despite Killingsworth's impact on Briggs's thinking, Briggs's dissertation did not deal with structural unemployment. "It was a study of strike subsidies, which was a straight collective bargaining issue at the time."[7] The human resource economics that Killingsworth was teaching his undergraduates was so new that it had not yet been incorporated into the graduate labor courses. Briggs's doctoral thesis led to his first two academic articles, one on an employers' mutual aid pact in the airline industry and the other on the railroad industry's "strike insurance plan" (Briggs 1965, 1967).

TEXAS AND LABOR-MARKET STUDIES

Briggs began his first full-time teaching job, with the University of Texas, at the start of the 1964–1965 academic year.[8] The Texas department chair, Carey Thompson, was looking for someone in the labor area because Ray Marshall, the only labor economist at Texas at the time, was going on a two-year leave of absence. Thompson contacted Briggs on the recommendation of Roger Bowlby, who studied economics in Austin and taught labor law at MSU. Although there were other candidates, Briggs believes he was chosen in part because he had "in-

stitutionalist training going back to Maryland." He adds: "Texas was an institutionalist department at the time, a real center of it. Clarence Ayres [one of the nation's leading institutionalists] was still actively teaching in the department."

In each semester during his first year at Texas, Briggs taught a labor course, a principles course, and an intermediate micro-theory course. He was assigned the intermediate microeconomics course because he had studied with Lerner, who was widely considered "one of the great gods of economic theory." In the spring of 1965, he began to teach a course called "Manpower Economics and Public Policy"—one of the earliest courses in the nation on human resource economics. It was, of course, "what Killingsworth was working on all these years. I was continuing his tradition with this course," Briggs explains.

"Manpower Economics and Public Policy" examined the importance of the "employability" of the nation's labor force. Topics included education, training, labor mobility, labor-market information, and anti-discrimination policies: "All the things which were now becoming so prominent a part of President Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' program—and I was right in Lyndon Johnson's backyard," says Briggs. "It was an exciting time."

When Marshall returned to Austin, Briggs collaborated with him on a variety of labor-market projects. "Ray Marshall was one of the great influences on me . . . And he and I made a wonderful team. We wrote several books and articles together."[9]

Their first project involved developing a national apprenticeship outreach program. Apprenticeship—which combines classroom instruction and hands-on experience—seemed like the ideal form of training for skilled labor, and yet it was an exclusionary system. "It was an enormous civil rights issue. The labor movement had supported the Civil Rights bill, but most craft unions were simply closed to black members," says Briggs. With a U.S. Department of Labor grant, he and Marshall showed how the apprenticeship system could be retained in a nondiscriminatory manner.[10]

The key was reaching out to find people who could meet an apprenticeship program's qualifications but who had no idea that these job opportunities were available. "Simply saying 'we don't discriminate anymore' wasn't going to cut it," Briggs explains. He adds: "Bobby

Kennedy, who was a senator at the time, praised the study as the most worthwhile study he'd ever seen from academia, dealing with a real problem and coming up with a real solution." In the end, the labor movement endorsed the program and the federal government financed its operation nationwide.

Briggs and Marshall then worked on studies of African-American employment in the South. One project looked at the labor market in Houston, Texas. "Houston had a very tight labor market at the time, but there was no improvement in the economic status of black Americans," Briggs recalls. His conclusion was that tight labor markets alone would not change racial patterns of employment or eradicate job discrimination. Policy intervention was essential: "Not only to see to it that antidiscrimination policies were enforced, but also to deal with the fact that many blacks needed to have the educational skills that unequal schools and traditions of discrimination had denied them for over a century." This research caused the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to convene public hearings in Houston in June 1970, and the testimony reinforced the findings and conclusions of Marshall and Briggs.[11]

Briggs was soon teaching undergraduates, graduate students, and union members on a regular basis. "Labor unions often needed speakers to come in to do training sessions. Well, it was either Ray or me, or both of us . . . Quite often they wanted Ray, but he was so busy that he started sending me—some people even began to think I was Ray. They would write an invitation letter to him and I'd show up." Despite the heavy demands on his time, Briggs considers the work with unionists a valuable experience: "I was actually seeing people who were doing negotiating, being involved with arbitration, and dealing with labor law and the rest of the things you just talk about in the classroom."

At the same time, Briggs's students encouraged him to study the South's rural labor markets. He recalls:

> In those early years at Texas, when I was working on this apprenticeship study, a number of Chicano students I had in class were asking why I didn't talk about issues of Texas and Mexican Americans. And of course, I didn't know anything about either . . . Several of these Chicano students were instrumental in introducing me to Cesar Chavez when he came through Texas on his way down to organize farm workers in the spring and summer of 1966 . . . My

> students were instrumental in getting me involved with the Farm Workers' Assistance Committee that year.[12]

The 1966 struggle centered on an organizational strike at La Casita Farms in rural Starr County, located on the Mexico border. The Assistance Committee gathered money or food in Austin during the week, and then on the weekends someone would drive it down to the Rio Grande Valley. "One day it came my turn to drive the food down and to spend the weekend in Starr County . . . On a Saturday morning, I went to the border, and I saw buses picking up strikebreakers, driving them to La Casita Farms and then taking them right through the picket lines. I knew immediately that the strike was lost," Briggs recalls.[13] The experience impressed upon him the need "to learn about the border and influence of the border on the labor supply of South Texas." Upon returning home, Briggs began to include immigration and border issues in his manpower course.

In the early 1970s, Briggs participated in a three-year study of the Starr County labor market as part of a rural labor-markets consortium project with three other southern universities. He found that the rural labor supply was in constant surplus, largely due to border commuters and immigration, which prevented most wages from rising beyond the legal minimum. In fact, says Briggs, "Even with these low wage levels, there was a lot of corruption by employers demanding wage kickbacks if you wanted to get a job. If they paid the minimum wage, they expected people to kick back 20 cents an hour as a reward for being hired." His University of Texas work on this subject culminated in a 1977 book, *The Chicano Worker*, coauthored with two professors at UCLA, Fred Schmidt and Walter Fogel. It was one of the first books to address the topic (Briggs, Fogel, and Schmidt 1977).

The Chicano Worker represents a beginning as well as an ending. "My interest in immigration started with this work, and the issue has become the dominant concern of my work in the last couple of decades," Briggs observes. "I gradually got more and more interested in immigration primarily because of my interest in the economic status of Chicanos and in trying to understand why it didn't seem to make any difference whether most of them had any education or training or not." For those not attending college, it did not matter whether they completed high school or dropped out; their wage would still be at just

about the legal minimum. "The whole human capital model was being refuted because you couldn't prove that there was any real reward to education or training for most of this rural workforce."[14]

CORNELL AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

Briggs moved to Cornell University's New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations in time to begin the fall semester of 1978. It was not easy to leave Austin, and he still misses Texas. There were, however, some frustrations and attractions that contributed to the decision to move northward.

One frustration was an ongoing conflict that the Texas faculty and students had with Frank Erwin, chairman of the university's Board of Regents. Erwin "constantly harangued the faculty" and broke up the College of Arts and Sciences in 1970, leading to the departure of John Silber, who had been dean of the College, and many prominent faculty members. "There were also constant confrontations between the students and the Regents over a large range of issues," Briggs recalls.

Even more important were the attractions associated with Cornell. The flagship institution in labor and industrial relations had invited him to teach the human resource economics course he pioneered at Texas, provided him access to outstanding research facilities, and offered him an opportunity to teach elective courses such as immigration policy. "I probably never would have gotten the chance to teach a course in immigration at Texas" because the department was spread so thin. In fact, when the Cornell offer came, Ray Marshall was serving in Washington, D.C., as Secretary of Labor in the Carter administration. "I envisioned that he wasn't coming back for eight years . . . So, when the Cornell offer came I thought maybe I should take the chance and go." Looking back, he concludes the decision was a good one; "I've had a wonderful career at Cornell."

For a number of years, Briggs continued to address human resource issues such as youth employment, apprenticeship, and public-service employment, but his research gradually shifted to a focus almost exclusively on immigration. "Immigration is one of those fields that you

can never learn enough about," he explains. "It's so complicated with illegal immigration, legal immigration, refugees, asylum seekers, border commuters, non-immigrant temporary workers, and the list goes on." While human resource economics remained the mainstay of his teaching, Briggs added a course called "Immigration and the American Labor Force" to his regular course offerings starting in 1981.

Briggs became an emeritus professor at Cornell in 2006, but he continues to follow and write about U.S. immigration policy debates. Indeed, he believes the topic is perhaps more important than ever. Briggs explained:

> Immigration has an enormous influence on the labor force in the United States, and it's got an enormous influence on the nation's future in a sense that now we're not getting much growth from demography anymore. The "baby boom" generation is heading into retirement and the movement of women into the labor market is probably not going to go up much more. So the major source of growth of the labor force is going to be from immigration.

Looking at immigration reform bills on the horizon in 2007, Briggs was concerned that low-wage workers would be adversely affected by the proposed legislation:

> We have about a third to a half of the growth of the labor force right now coming from immigration—and the percentage is going to go up enormously should any of the pending immigration reform bills pass, with all the amnesties and the family reunification that will ensue. There will be an enormous growth in size of the labor force, and most of the new entrants are going to be poorly educated, poorly skilled, and non-English speaking job seekers. This is going to be a nightmare for public policy to deal with should this legislation pass.

Briggs wants an immigration policy "that's consistent and congruent with the national interests." That means decisions would be driven by employment-based considerations—labor-market needs and immigrant skills—rather than the recent emphasis on family unification. And he is "not very optimistic" that Congress will move in this direction. Briggs believes that immigration policy and immigration reform efforts are so heavily shaped by political expedience that there's little chance for much progress in low-wage markets. "The policy is being formed

by special interests seeking cheap labor or trying to get immigration or amnesty priority for their particular groups."[15]

LEGACY OF TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Since Briggs is quite modest, I knew he would be reluctant to say much about his legacy. Still, Briggs mentioned two areas where he hopes he has been successful. One is in the realm of university teaching. Recalling Dillard, Gruchy, Killingsworth, Lerner, Marshall, Grubbs, and the other professors and colleagues that influenced his own thinking, Briggs said he hopes his legacy as a teacher would be "first and foremost." His primary aim, Briggs says, has been "to stimulate minds like the people who stimulated mine when I was a student . . . [and] to inspire others as I was inspired."

The other area he mentioned is that of applied research. "I hope I have mastered my subject matter and done my research in a way that is not just for the advancement of my own career, but also for the advancement public policy," Briggs says. He adds:

> I've always tried to select subjects that were important to the public and to the nation. For me, that's what economics is about. It's an operational field that should be dealing with the real world and real world issues, and coming up with public policies that can be actually implemented. I have sought to address public policies that have an influence on the nation's welfare.

True to form, however, Briggs concluded that his ability to succeed as a teacher and real-world labor economist would be for others to judge. Well, let there be no mistake: as a former student and fellow economist, I can report that Vernon Briggs has not merely succeeded; he has also set a high bar for those he inspired.[16]

Notes

1. While I am most comfortable addressing him as Dr. Briggs (during the course of this project, I have had to force myself to call him Vernon), subsequent references to Vernon Briggs in this chapter yield to the conventions of academic writing and refer to him as Briggs. I would like to thank Dr. Briggs for helpful comments and edits of the interview transcript, the Sam M. Walton College of Business for financial support, and Charles Whalen for the opportunity to participate in this volume. Any remaining errors are my own. A copy of the full transcript has been deposited in the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, located at the Martin P. Catherwood Library, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes in this chapter are Briggs's remarks in response to the interview conducted by this author in May 2007 (Curington 2007).
3. The affection MSU economics graduate students had for Adams was particularly evident when he took a leave of absence to serve in the administration of President John F. Kennedy. "We were petrified when he went to Washington in January 1961," says Briggs, who also recalls that upon his return, Adams said, "The duty of a professor is to profess in the classroom." Since Briggs holds the same view, it is not surprising that he and Adams became great friends over the later years.
4. "We had to have the statistics courses in those days too," Briggs adds. "Econometrics was not an independent field of study as it has become today. You had to take statistics courses as part of your doctoral program, but they weren't considered to be a field . . . I had to take four courses in statistics taught by the statistics department, not the economics department." In addition to statistics and a field outside economics, Briggs's doctoral degree required four fields within economics (his were economic theory, labor economics, industrial organization, and the history of economic thought) and two foreign languages (his were Spanish and German).
5. Reflecting on the Republican opposition to Kennedy's proposal, Briggs says, "It is ironic that every Republican since Ronald Reagan has based their rationale for cutting taxes to stimulate the economy on the Kennedy experience." (Of course, the Kennedy tax cuts were enacted three months after his death.)
6. The computer at MSU, constructed in 1956, "occupied a 25 foot by 30 foot room on the fifth floor of the Electrical Engineering Building" (Ball 2006).
7. The strike subsidy was a defensive device that companies used in strike-prone sectors of the economy, such as the airline, railroad, and newspaper industries. The tendency was for unions to strike one employer and then use the settlement as a "whipsaw" to get the same benefits from the industry's other companies. In response, companies devised agreements that provided assistance to the company that was shut down.
8. Briggs defended his dissertation in 1965.
9. Regarding Ray Marshall's influence on his thinking, Briggs says:

   > He was a true pioneer in the study of the economics of discrimination and a real critic of Gary Becker's theoretical propositions. Ray dealt with dis-

> crimination as it was—noting that it is often institutionalized and covert in its manifestations. It often involves the lack of the opportunity to be prepared for jobs and the lack of information and all the rest of the really hardcore issues that Becker's thesis ignores. Becker's thesis is a pretty narrow definition of discrimination: only if people are equally productive but paid differently can there be discrimination. It is more a theory of wages than a theory of discrimination.

10. On the decision of Briggs and Marshall to address labor-market discrimination, Briggs says, "One thing we both had in common was an understanding of segregation, discrimination, and the South. He was from Mississippi . . . I grew up in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., when it was a totally segregated city as were all the public institutions in Maryland . . . We knew first-hand how terrible and cruel that was, how unfair it was."
11. In addition to Marshall, the other "enormous influence" on Briggs while at Texas was his economics-department colleague, Cliff (Clifton M.) Grubbs. Although Grubbs was hired to teach mathematical economics, he was mainly interested in how the economy of the West developed and how the United States had become such a technologically advanced society. As a result, Briggs had lengthy discussions with Grubbs that "fed right into the Killingsworth emphasis on computers and technology as guiding forces affecting the labor market." Grubbs was an outstanding teacher; after winning the highest teaching honors in Austin, he eventually received the Danforth prize, awarded to the finest college teacher in the nation. "He was a great inspiration to me about the importance of teaching and the importance of science and technology on the development of the American economy . . . Our families bought some land together in Colorado. We spent many summer evenings discussing issues from [his] reading lists." For remarks delivered at Grubbs's memorial service, see Briggs (1995).
12. Briggs adds that Chicano, not Hispanic or Mexican American, "was the preferred term at the time."
13. The strikebreakers lived in Mexico but were permanent resident aliens. They had "green cards" that permitted them to work in the United States. Briggs adds, "Technically, it is illegal to do this, but laws do not enforce themselves."
14. Briggs adds that the Kerner Commission (the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) found that many African Americans had a similar labor-market experience in the nation's urban centers: "For those who didn't go on to college, it really didn't make any difference whether they stayed in high school or dropped out of school."
15. For Briggs, "It is very unfortunate that the recommendations of the Commission on Immigration Reform have never been followed." He explains:

> Barbara Jordan, who I got to know through my work in Houston back in the late 1960s when she was a Senator in the Texas legislature, chaired the commission in the 1990s. I testified before them several times and their recommendations are consistent with my views . . . However, today

you have massive immigration without any regard for the human capital endowments of the entrants.

16. For additional personal reflections on Briggs's influences and academic contributions, see Rohe (2006).

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