

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

# MELVIN BELLI

a candid conversation with the embattled, outspoken attorney who defended Jack Ruby

"The mad, ~~maniac~~ of the San Francisco bar" ... "a ~~caustic~~ ... "a publicity-mad pettifogger" ... "the S. Hurok of the legal ~~profession~~"—these are among the kinder things said about San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli (pronounced "bell-eye" ~~like~~ ~~Ray~~). He is unquestionably among the greatest living trial lawyers, however, is ~~conceded~~ even by Belli's legion of enemies, including no few as formidable in stature as the American Bar Association, the American Medical Association, most major insurance firms, J. Edgar Hoover, Robert Kennedy, Richard Nixon ~~did~~, perhaps most recently, the city of Dallas, Texas, ever since Jack Ruby—with Belli as his counsel—was sentenced to death there for the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald.

An eminent attorney long before the Ruby trial, "Belli has had more effect on the law in the past ten years than any 50 lawyers in the last century," in the possibly overenthusiastic opinion of a colleague. Indeed, many of his cases have established, or carried forward, major precedents in America's civil and criminal law. Defending those accused of rape, robbery, assault, arson, murder, fraud, pimping, income-tax evasion, forgery and even overtime parking, he has won literally hundreds of criminal cases. But he is best known as "The King of Torts"—a title he cordially dislikes—for his victories in more than 100 personal-injury and medical-malpractice suits, in which he has earned for clients awards rang-

ing from \$100,000 to a record-setting \$675,000. He has also pioneered the use of "demonstrative evidence" before juries—graphic, and sometimes grisly, courtroom displays of artificial limbs, autopsy photographs, skeletons, mannequins, X rays, witnesses on stretchers—inspiring William Prosser, former dean of the University of California Law School, to call him "a Hollywood producer," and his trials "epics of the supercolossal." So potent is the Belli image, however, that defendant insurance companies have sometimes made substantial settlements when mere mention of his name that Belli might be hired. ~~He~~ ~~is~~ ~~an~~ ~~international~~ ~~law~~ ~~practitioner~~ ~~with~~ ~~a~~ ~~rigorous~~ ~~schedule~~ ~~of~~ ~~writing~~ ~~and~~ ~~teaching~~ ~~takes~~ ~~Belli~~ ~~around~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~regularly~~ ~~followed~~ ~~by~~ ~~hundreds~~ ~~of~~ ~~controversial~~ ~~cases~~ ~~but~~ ~~no~~ ~~case~~ ~~has~~ ~~damaged~~ ~~him~~ ~~as~~ ~~many~~ ~~headlines~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~comb~~ ~~he~~ ~~lost~~ ~~15~~ ~~months~~ ~~ago~~ ~~in~~ ~~Dallas~~ ~~where~~ ~~he~~ ~~caused~~ ~~a~~ ~~courtroom~~ ~~riot~~ ~~by~~ ~~leaping~~ ~~up~~ ~~after~~ ~~the~~ ~~announcement~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~verdict~~ ~~tears~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~to~~ ~~denounce~~ ~~the~~ ~~death~~ ~~sentence~~ ~~for~~ ~~Jack~~ ~~Ruby~~ ~~as~~ ~~"the~~ ~~shotgun~~ ~~justice~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~hangaroo~~ ~~court."~~

It was to explore the issues and the aftermath of this historic trial, as well as the other unpopular causes he has espoused, during his 32-year career, that we went to San Francisco early this spring for an exclusive interview with the embattled 57-year-old attorney. He greeted us in the three-story Belli Building, which he had bought from ten Chinese

owners and spent \$50,000 restoring to such turn-of-the-century elegance that it has been formally designated State Landmark Number 408 by the California Historical Association. The local San Francisco Gray Line tours include a glimpse from the street through the picture window of Belli's private office, where Belli himself may be seen at his vintage desk consulting with clients and colleagues amid a spectacular Victorian mélange of heavy crystal chandeliers, velvet chairs, leather couches, antimacassars, quill pens, oil paintings, awards for Belli's forensic triumphs, thousands of legal and medical books, an array of apothecary jars, several human skeletons and a 25-foot-long bar. With a small communications network of telephones and speaker systems, Belli maintains touch with 18 lawyers on the premises, their secretaries, private investigators and sundry other specialists attending the cases of clients, by the dozens who have been lured by Belli's magic name and lofty courtroom bating average.

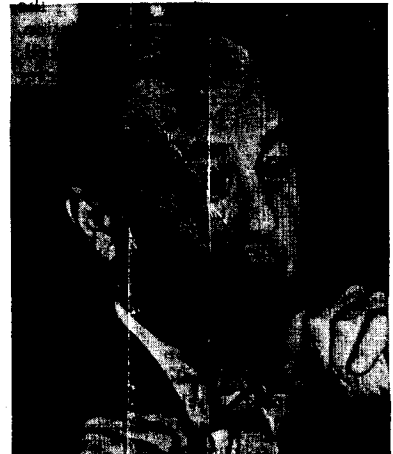
In a casual display of expansive graciousness, millionaire Belli flipped to us the keys to his Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud for our use during the visit; and he wine and dined us regally in his \$280,000 Twin Peaks home. During our weeklong series of conversations, we accompanied him to speaking engagements and joined him at his tailor's for the fitting of three new suits. And on our first morning in town, we even helped



"Look at the creeps who favor capital punishment; you get the feeling they want to be the ones to pull the switch. Dick Nixon is all out for it; I can't think of a better argument for its abolition."



"I'm for hire. I'll defend anyone who comes to me—even the president of the Bar Association suing a guy for accusing him of being in favor of civil rights, due process of law and against wire tapping."



"I've endured my share of slings. Belli's a nut, a charlatan, an egomaniac. Sure, I'm flamboyant; I can afford to be—I'm a damn good lawyer. You've got to ring the bell to get the people into the temple."

him transplant geraniums in his office window box as his fire-engine-red slacks and shirt showed the coming tourists in the street outside. In his bizarre setting, we began by posing a hypothetical question.

**PLAYBOY:** You said once that "any lawyer worthy of the name has a commitment to defend the pariah, unpopular defendant." You proved your point when you defended Jack Ruby. Would you have been as willing to defend Lee Oswald if he had lived?

**BELLI:** I would have hated to, for I loved Jack Kennedy very much. But as a lawyer, I must acknowledge that any man charged with any crime, however heinous, is entitled to competent representation. So if Oswald had lived, and he hadn't been able to obtain other competent counsel, and I had been asked to take his case—yes, I would have represented him. If I had refused, I feel I would have had to turn in my shingle. I like to think that the American Bar hasn't sunk so low. There are not other defense attorneys in this country who would have done the same thing.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you think Oswald's rights as an accused were adequately protected by the Dallas authorities?

**BELLI:** Oswald's treatment by the law was the biggest scandal in the history of American justice. The world saw the horrendous spectacle of Oswald, without counsel, interrogated for hours and thrust into that night mob-scene "press conference" and shouted questions in police headquarters corridors. He had no counsel to object as dozens of self-seeking, self-serving "authorities" volunteered to the press their prejudicial, incriminating and otherwise unwarranted statements regarding Oswald's guilt. He went a full day without counsel. In my belief, the public's mounting outcry shamed the attempt to send the president of the Dallas Bar Association, H. Louis Nichols, to see him in his cell. As far as I know, Nichols has never been inside a trial courtroom except for official inductions to office, eulogies and ceremonial purposes. His lack of action then did what strikes me as thinkable and unforgivable by any interview to the press that destroyed Oswald's obvious defense, that he was mentally ill. Nichols told the press that "I'm perfectly all right to me," which obviously and automatically helped the establishment condition public opinion against any insanity defense for Oswald. Where was an Oswald defense counsel to scream in protest when Dallas' free-tutor told millions watching on television, "Oswald is the guilty man. There is no doubt about it, and we're going to fry him!" What kind of defense counsel would have consented to the Dallas police department's utterly unbelievably stupid act of marching Os-

wald right out into the open—for television? An expert defense counsel for Oswald should have been of urgent priority for the American Bar Association—while he was alive. But not until Oswald was safely dead did he get a counsel. When his lawyer couldn't be embarrassed by being seen sitting next to an assassin, an unpopular defendant, then national A.B.A. president Walter E. Craig was appointed to represent Oswald at the Warren Commission hearing.

**PLAYBOY:** Despite the Warren Report, the belief persists in some circles, especially abroad, that Oswald and Ruby were parties to a right-wing plot against the President's life—a plot in which the FBI, the Secret Service and even the Warren Commission conspired to conceal "the truth." Do you feel that these suspicions have any substance?

**BELLI:** They're hallucinatory and utterly preposterous. Do you want to know who I believe is solely responsible for starting these rumors? The Dallas police department and the Dallas district attorney's office. Their ominous insinuations that Oswald and Ruby knew each other started during the trial. In the judge's chambers I tried to persuade the D.A. to announce in court that there was no truth to these rumors which could have been quashed on the spot—but it appeared to me that the D.A. encouraged them, so as to make Jack Ruby seem some kind of conspiratorial monster. So the rumor that he had killed Oswald to "silence" him got cable-d abroad, and it steadily mushroomed, tarnishing the image not only of our live-entertainment agencies but of our nation. It has been made to appear that our FBI either could not or would not report the full story of the plot. There was even an outrageous rumor that our own President Lyndon Johnson conspired in the assassination, to succeed to the Presidency. Now, I know as much about the assassination as any man alive, and I can tell you flatly that it was the barren, solitary act of Lee Oswald. He was a crazy man. And he and Ruby were strangers. Those are facts. The most incredible thing to me is why the FBI didn't pass along to the Secret Service the lengthy file it had on Oswald. But as much as I detest the type of man that J. Edgar Hoover is, I can't make myself believe that the FBI or the CIA or anyone else suppressed knowledge of any plot. On the Warren Commission, we had seven wise and honorable men, some of the best. If they couldn't come up with the truth, then God pity us all!

**PLAYBOY:** What significance do you attach to Warren's statement, during the Commission's deliberations, that the full story of the assassination "won't come out in our lifetimes"?

**BELLI:** None. That was a horse's-ass thing for Justice Warren to say. I don't

know what he meant, but I don't think he meant anything ominous by it. If you're looking for unold facts, though, I can tell you something that people never knew. The night before Oswald was shot, I learned, a Dallas policeman and his girlfriend talked with Jack Ruby, trying to get him to approve of the idea of having Oswald lynched. Their reason was that they knew what a weak-minded guy Jack Ruby was. At the trial, I never mentioned the cop and his girl, because I never could locate them again; they just disappeared.

**PLAYBOY:** Why did you take on the Ruby case? Some say it was for the publicity.

**BELLI:** Look, I'm for hire. I will defend anyone who comes to me—even the president of the Bar Association suing a guy for defamation, for accusing him of being a liberal, in favor of civil rights, due process of law, and against wire tapping. My service to the community as a trial lawyer is that I am for hire by either side. As far as publicity is concerned, I'd had my fill of that long before that travesty of a trial ever came along. My motive in taking the case was that I hoped I might be able to do something for that sick man, Jack Ruby, for psychiatry, for law, and for tolerance. But I didn't volunteer for the job. Jack's brother Earl asked me if I would take the case, and he offered me a defense fee of \$100,000.

**PLAYBOY:** Did that sum play any part in your decision?

**BELLI:** I agreed to take the case for the reasons I've just stated. But since you've brought up the money, it might interest you to know that I never got anything like \$100,000 for the case. What I got was debts—bills, expenses for our defense team, for the medical experts who flew to Dallas to testify for Ruby, and other costs. I did get about \$12,000 from the Rubys, but I paid for every percent of the bill out of my own pocket—about \$10,000. It might also interest you to know that I was offered \$100,000 from another source not to defend Jack Ruby. I'm not saying what source.

**PLAYBOY:** There has been some speculation that you offer \$25,000 from a well-known right-wing Dallas millionaire.

**BELLI:** If that's what you heard, that's what you heard.

**PLAYBOY:** That's all I want to say about it?

**BELLI:** No more—now.

**PLAYBOY:** All right, if you accepted the case, what made you decide on a plea of temporary insanity?

**BELLI:** The incontrovertible evidence of psychiatric examinations. Jack Ruby was and is a very sick man who belongs in a mental hospital. We owed to our national image a dramatic example of how the American legal system pursues

and protects a defendant's rights. We owed to our own law an exposure of the incongruities in our law's understanding of mental illness. Indeed, for the world to see and appreciate the modern medical specialty of psychotherapy at work was one of the great promises of that trial. And those brilliant clinical experts—psychologists and neurologists—who examined Jack Ruby put together an unmistakably clear picture of a mentally unstable man whom the assassination had stunned and shocked and impelled into frantic, attention-seeking compulsions beyond his power to control. Nothing I've ever sensed in advance about the line of defense for a client has ever been more graphically justified by the evidence—or more ignored by a jury.

I never dreamed what a kangaroo court of mockery and errors and prejudice in law and decency we were going to face in that city. There isn't one fair-minded lawyer who won't appreciate what I'm saying when the transcript can be read. I've disagreed with jury verdicts before; every lawyer has. But I've never felt that the jurors weren't honestly trying to do their very best—except on that black day there in Dallas.

**PLAYBOY:** Bitter criticism and even American Bar Association censure have been leveled at you for shouting after the verdict. "May I thank the jury for a victory of bigotry and injustice!" How do you feel about it now?

**BELLI:** As outraged as I did then. It was a spontaneous outburst of horror at the callous death sentence from a jury that had taken actually less than one hour to consider all of the complex scientific testimony about that pitiful, afflicted little man. I shouted long, vituperatively, and in tears, that a kangaroo court and a bigoted jury had railroaded Jack Ruby to purge their collective conscience in a rape of American justice that made Dallas a city of shame forevermore. Too often have our courts of law shown us that vindictive streak, that drive to heap society's sins upon an individual, that hypocritical refusal to face facts inherent in which are unpleasant truths about ourselves. The watching, listening world needed to hear a voice from among those Americans who recognized what had happened, and who were sickened by Dallas' cruelty, the smugness, the community defensiveness and the blind determination to crucify one man for everyone's sins.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you think that's any more true of Dallas than it would have been of any other city where the President might have been murdered?

**BELLI:** It's *uniquely* true of Dallas. Dallas is unlike any other city in America; even the rest of Texas, thank God, is different from Dallas. Federal Judge Sarah Hughes called Dallas "the only American city in which the President could

have been shot." Every major publication had veteran writers there who appraised and reported Dallas in such terms as "murder capital of the world," "a sick city," "a festering sore," "a city of shame and hate." Here is a city where a minister told his flock, "If any of you vote for this Catholic Kennedy, don't you ever come to my church again." Here is a city where I took my wife and son to a beautiful Baptist church and on the Sunday program an usher gave me, the Lord's message was squeezed down in a corner under the church's impressive balance sheet full of dollar signs. Here is a city where I entered a barbershop, unrecognized, and someone discussing the trial said, "I hear they got those Jew psychiatrists out from Maryland," and someone replied, "Yeah, with their slick Jew lawyers." I swept the towel from around my neck, stood straight up, gave the Nazi salute, yelled "*Achtung! Heil Hitler!*" and goose-stepped outside. Here is a city whose prosecutor said of a St. Patrick's Day parade, "Maybe we're pressing our luck too far to allow another parade so soon for another Irishman!" And the same prosecutor said, "Well, if they want to look inside of Jack Ruby's brain, we'll give it to them after we fry him!"

Dallas is where Adlai Stevenson was spat upon and hit upon the head with a picket sign, and where the American flag was hung upside down by General Edwin Walker, an ardent advocate of the philosophy of the John Birch Society. In Dallas in 1960 even Lyndon Johnson and his lady had been insulted. Dallas is a city where the "Minutewomen" get on telephones and call all over with such messages as "Mental health is Communistic" and "Fluoridation of water is Communistic."

**PLAYBOY:** Aren't you describing the activities of a lunatic fringe?

**BELLI:** Look, I'm not talking about *all* the citizens of Dallas. I'm talking about the oligarchy that *rules* and *runs* the city. I'd be the first to admit that some of America's truly fine people live there. In Dallas I met two of the greatest stand-up guys I ever knew: Stanley Marcus of Neiman-Marcus—it took visceral courage to speak out as he did; and Rabbi Silverman—he was one of the bravest men there. No, my contempt is reserved solely for the city's archreactionary oligarchy. You know what made them madder at me than anything else? It was when I said what *symbolized* Dallas for me: a gold-plated bidet I'd seen with a philodendron growing out of it. They were enraged at the implication that they hadn't known what to do with it. Well, I take that back. They *do* know what they can do with it.

I'll never forget how Sheriff Bill Decker said he was going to see to the "safety" of Joe Tonahill, my trial assistant,

and me: He was going to have a police car deliver us to court "because there's so much high feeling around here." I told him, "Look, I appreciate your concern, but we're going to walk down goddamn Main Street to the courthouse. Whenever it gets to the point here in America, in my own country, that I can't walk down any main street as a trial lawyer, then I'll have to take down my shingle." And I would. I'd go to Congress and walk outside wearing a sandwich board. I'd howl to the heavens. I might have to do some flamboyant things to get my story heard, but you know I know just how to do it. In any case, we *did* walk down that Main Street in Dallas to the trial, but I'm going to tell you the truth, I was scared shitless. I used to say, despite all my enemies, that no one would ever actually want to shoot me. But now, after walking down that street and seeing the hate in the eyes of everyone who watched, I never would say that again.

**PLAYBOY:** Was your outburst in court the reason for your being dismissed as Ruby's lawyer after the trial?

**BELLI:** I was not fired. I bowed out of my own accord. I lost my objectivity that day in Dallas. Once I lose my objectivity, I've lost my value in our adversary system of justice. So I got out of the case. It's as simple as that.

**PLAYBOY:** What do you think will result from the appeal of Ruby's conviction which is now pending?

**BELLI:** I think that everyone in law knows what will almost automatically happen when an appellate court reviews that trial transcript away from that emotionally charged Dallas courtroom. I pray to God that the terrible miscarriages of American justice that trial transcript contains will cause the case to be reversed. And I pray, for the sake of that sick, pathetic little man, Jack Ruby—whose already paranoid-schizophrenic condition has deteriorated shockingly during his long imprisonment without psychiatric care, and who has tried several times to commit suicide in his cell, once by butting his head against the wall—that his cruel death sentence will be commuted to life imprisonment in a mental hospital, where he has belonged since the day they put him in Dallas' city jail a year and a half ago.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you favor capital punishment in murder cases where the assailant is adjudged mentally sound?

**BELLI:** I don't favor institutional vengeance under *any* circumstances. Who in God's name has the right to pass judgment on the life of another human being? Who's to usurp this divine prerogative? Only a primitive mind sanctions this kind of barbarity. Just look at the creeps who are in favor of it; you get the feeling they want to be the ones to pull the switch. Dick Nixon is all out for

have to like it to be forced to appreciate the fact of its widespread use, which makes its counteruse unavoidable. If I'm a layman, I can turn away from an ugly wound, but not if I'm a surgeon—and as a lawyer, I am a surgeon of sorts; I have to use every means at my command to represent my client, just as a surgeon has to use every instrument or drug at his command to save his patient. It's simply that bugging is now so commonplace that no conscientious and realistic lawyer, however much he deplors it, has any choice but to use it.

**PLAYBOY:** Among the staunchest supporters of legalized electronic surveillance is the FBI. What do you think of its vaunted reputation for scientific crime detection?

**BELLI:** Their technical expertise is more impressive than their reputation. Sure, it's a patriotic institution, as sacrosanct as motherhood—but both can get a bit sickening when overportrayed, which they are. While it spends its time and the taxpayers' money chasing two-bit car thieves and looking for Communist spies in Greyhound bus stations, organized crime continues to get fat off of prostitution, dope, gambling, "juice" and murder for hire; it's the nation's biggest business. With its resources and its power, there's no reason in God's world why the FBI couldn't have broken up the syndicate long ago if Hoover really wanted to. The reason he hasn't is simply that syndicate bigwigs are so good at covering up their tracks that it's hellishly difficult to get a conviction, and he wants to keep his precious FBI's gleaming escutcheon unbesmirched by failure.

**PLAYBOY:** We take it you're not one of his greatest admirers.

**BELLI:** You might say that. If you want a good scare, get a copy of Fred Cook's book, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, and read it some dark night. It tells the cold, hard facts about Hoover. As the FBI's revered director, he's done a great job—of making his position more secure than that of most crowned heads in this troubled world. Hoover's dictatorial ideas and ideology have no place in a position of such power in a democracy.

**PLAYBOY:** What is his ideology?

**BELLI:** The ideology of fascism, of rightism. Look at how many ex-FBI men are members of the John Birch Society; I wonder where they picked it up. Hoover is an archreactionary autocrat who deprecates the concept that "we the people" are fit to govern ourselves. He's a dangerous, dangerous man whom we should have gotten rid of a long time ago. Given full rein, he'd legalize not only wire tapping but search-without-warrant and no-knock-and-enter; in the name of law and order, he would completely abandon due process and the constitutional protections guaranteed to every citizen.

**PLAYBOY:** Aren't you going a bit far?

**BELLI:** I probably am—because I'm telling the truth. When this appears in print, I fully expect a knock at the door from Mr. Hoover's gray-flannel minions. They've already tried to tap my phones and monkey with my mail. But I've had uninvited nocturnal visitors before. I'm ready for them. The question is: Are they ready for me?

**PLAYBOY:** Speaking of violating individual rights, do you feel, as some have charged, that Robert Kennedy, as Attorney General, unduly and extralegally harassed Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa?

**BELLI:** God pity Hoffa. Any individual is in trouble today if he gets the eagle after him. One vicious man, Bobby Kennedy, subverting the powers of government, made it a mission to "get" Hoffa. Now, Hoffa's done a lot I don't like—but I think some of his convictions will be reversed. If Hoffa has done wrong—and maybe he has—the law will take care of him. He should be prosecuted, not persecuted.

**PLAYBOY:** *Fact* magazine recently attributed to you the following remarks about Robert Kennedy: "He's the most vicious, evil son of a bitch in American politics today. . . . Sure, he wants to be President, but what he really wants is to become head of the universe. . . . The Pope isn't safe with that little bastard around. . . . He's arrogant, rude, and even ignorant of the law. . . . He's the monied Little Lord Fauntleroy of government. . . . Every newspaperman knows what he is, and even Johnson can't stand him, but everybody is too scared of the son of a bitch." Are these accurate quotes?

**BELLI:** That's what I said. But I certainly didn't expect to see it on the cover of a magazine; indeed, I didn't expect to be directly quoted. But I've since had hundreds of both lawyers and laymen write and telephone me to say, "I wish to hell I'd had the guts to say the same thing." Kennedy as Attorney General had absolutely no experience for the job as top lawyer of the United States. Who is this man, who has never been in a courtroom, to tell me how to act, or to tell my colleague trial lawyers how to act? Which he did. But quite apart from that, and his vendetta against Hoffa, I know of nothing Bobby Kennedy as Attorney General did that he could point to with pride.

**PLAYBOY:** How about his department's dedication to the enforcement of civil rights legislation?

**BELLI:** His office did a tremendous and good job on civil rights; but in *Jack Kennedy's Administration*, could any Attorney General's office have done less?

**PLAYBOY:** What do you feel can be done to rectify the mockery of justice in Southern courts, which perennially exonerate whites charged with murdering Negroes?

**BELLI:** These segregationist barbarians

—the ones who pull the trigger and the ones who let them off—affront not only the law of man but the law of God; they disgrace themselves and our country before the world. But this conspiracy of hatred and bigotry won't last; its days are numbered. In practical terms, however, we can't change the state laws or the inbred prejudices that keep them in force. I'm afraid we must resign ourselves to the fact that these atrocities, and these travesties of justice, will continue until the white South learns to understand and respect the spirit as well as the letter of due process and equality before the law. It just takes time. Pretty soon all the subterfuges, tricks and deceptions designed to circumvent the civil rights laws will have been tried by the die-hards and eliminated by the Supreme Court. Then, and only then, will Negroes in the South begin to enjoy the fruits of true freedom.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you share the conservative view that the present Supreme Court, because of its trail-blazing decisions in civil rights, censorship, school prayer and the like, is "too liberal"? And do you agree with those who feel that it has begun to unrightfully usurp legislative authority?

**BELLI:** What do you mean by "liberal" and "conservative"? If you mean that "liberals" are more concerned with human rights, and "conservatives" with property rights, I think that's as good a definition as any. According to that definition, the present Supreme Court is the most liberal we've ever had. But *too liberal*? No. As for assuming legislative authority, of course it has. But *unrightfully*? No. For good or for bad, our Supreme Court has without question become the second legislature in Washington. I say that not in criticism, only as something in the nature of things. I happen to think we have a *great* Supreme Court, the greatest decision-making Court we've ever had, the most humanitarian in our history. Earl Warren is a great administrator; he has integrity, ability. The individual justices are sincere and hard working; they try hard to be objective, to put country above personality; they're the best we've ever had. The Court has done the American people great justice in rendering the law consonant with the changing needs and increasing complexities of the contemporary world.