

TRANSCRIPT OF FPCC DEBATE OVER STATION WDSU

ANNOUNCER: It's time now for Conversation Carte Blanche. Here is Bill Slatter.

BILL SLATTER: Good evening, for the next few minutes Bill Stuckey and I, Bill whose program you've probably heard on Saturday night, "Latin Listening Post" Bill and I are going to be talking to three gentlemen the subject mainly revolving around Cuba. Our guests tonight are Lee Harvey Oswald, Secretary of the New Orleans Chapter of The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a New York headquartered organization which is generally recognized as the principal voice of the Castro government in this country. Our second guest is Ed Butler who is the Executive Vice-President of the Information Council of the Americas (INCA) which is headquartered in New Orleans and specializes in distributing anti-communist educational materials throughout Latin America, and our third guest is Carlos Bringuier, Cuban refugee and New Orleans Delegate of the Revolutionary Student Directorate one of the more active of the anti-Castro refugee organizations. Bill, if at this time you will briefly background the situation as you know it, Bill

BILL STUCKEY: First, for those who don't know too much about the Fair Play for Cuba Committee this is an organization that specializes primarily in distributing literature, based in New York. For the several years it has been in New York it has operated principally out of the east and out of the West Coast and a few college campuses, recently however attempts have been made to organize a chapter here in New Orleans. The only member of the group who has revealed himself publicly so far is 23 year old Lee Harvey Oswald who is secretary of the local chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He first came to public notice a few days ago when he was arrested and convicted for disturbing the peace. The ruckus in which he was involved started when several local Cuban refugees including Carlos Bringuier, who is with us tonight, discovered him distributing pro-Castro material on a downtown street. Now Mr. Oswald and Bringuier are with us tonight to give us opposing views on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and its objectives. I believe that I was probably the first New Orleans reporter to interview Mr. Oswald on his activities here since he first came into public view. Last Saturday in addition to having him on my show we had a very long and rambling question and answer session over various points of dogma and line of the fair Play for Cuba Committee and now I'll give you a very brief digest of some of the principal propaganda lines. I use the word propaganda, rather I should say informational lines of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

Number one the principal thing that they insist is that Castro's government today is completely free and independent, that it is in no way controlled by the Soviet Union. Another cardinal point of the Fair Play for Cuba committee's propaganda is that Premier Castro is forced to seek aid from the Russians only because the U.S. government refused to offer him financial aid.

Following another line I asked Mr. Oswald if he had ever, or was a member of the American Communist Party and he said that the only organization to which he belonged was the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Mr. Oswald also gave me this run down of his personal background. He said that he was a native of New Orleans, had attended Beauregard Junior High School and Warren Eastern High School. Had entered the U.S. Marine Corps, in 1956 and was honorably discharged in 1959. He said during our previous interview that he had lived in Ft. Worth, Texas before coming here to establish a Fair Play for Cuba chapter several weeks ago. However, there were a few items apparently that I suspect that Mr. Oswald left out in his original interview which was principally where he lived after, between 1959 and 1962. We, er, Mr. Butler brought some newspaper clippings to my attention and I also found some too, through an independent source, Washington Newspaper clippings to the effect that Mr. Oswald had attempted to renounce his American citizenship in 1959 and become a Soviet citizen. There was another clipping dated 1962 saying that Mr. Oswald had returned from the Soviet Union with his wife and child after having lived there three years. Mr. Oswald are these correct?

OSWALD: That is correct. Correct, yea.

BILL STUCKEY: You did live in Russia for three years?

OSWALD: That is correct and I think that those, the fact that I did live for a time in the Soviet Union gives me excellent qualifications to repudiate charges that Cuba and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is communist controlled.

BILL SLATTER: Mr. Bringuier perhaps you would like to dispute that point.

BRINGUIER: I'd like to know exactly the name of the organization that you represent here in the city, because I have some confusion, is Fair Play for Cuba Committee or Fair Play for Russia Committee?

OSWALD: Well that is a very provocative request and I don't think requires an answer.

BRINGUIER: Well I will tell you why because before the communists take over Cuba, Cuba was at the head of Latin American countries and I can show you that in Cuba in 1958 every 37 persons had an automobile and in Russia was 200 persons, In Cuba was 6 persons for one radio and in Russia was 20 persons for one radio, in Cuba was 1 TV set for 18 persons and in Russia was 85 persons for 1 television set, and in Cuba was 1 telephone for every 38 persons and in Russia was 1 telephone for every 580 persons. Cuba was selling the sugar in the American market and was receiving from the U.S. more than one hundred million dollars a year over the price of the world market and the U.S. was paying to Cuba that price in dollars. Right now Cuba is selling sugar to Russia. Russia is paying to Cuba 80% in machinery and 20% in dollars. I think that Cuba right now is a colony of Russia and the people of Cuba and the people of Cuba who is living in Cuba every day who is escaping from Cuba every day they disagree that you are representing the people of Cuba. Maybe you will represent the er, the colony of Russia here in this moment but not the people of Cuba. You cannot take that responsibility.

OSWALD: In order to give a clear and concise and short answer to each of those, well let's say questions, I would say that the facts and figures from, oh a country like Pakistan or Burma would even reflect more light on Cuba in relation to how many TV sets and how many radio and all that. This I don't think is the subject to be discussed tonight. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and as the name implies, is concerned primarily with Cuban-American relations.

SLATTER: How many people do you have in your committee here in New Orleans?

OSWALD: I cannot reveal that as Secretary of the Fair Play for Cuba committee.

BUTLER: Is it a secret society?

OSWALD: No, Mr. Butler, it is not. However, it is standard operating procedure for a political organization consisting of a political minority, to safeguard the names and the number of its members.

BUTLER: Well the Republicans are in the minority, I don't see them hiding their membership.

OSWALD: The Republicans are not a well, -- The Republicans are an established political party representing a great many people. They represent no radical point of view. They do not have a very violent and sometimes emotional opposition, as we do.

BUTLER: Oh. I see. Well would you say then that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is not a communist front organization?

OSWALD: The Senate Subcommittees, who have occupied themselves with investigating the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, have found that there is nothing to connect the two committees. We have been investigated from several points of view. That is, points of view of taxes, allegiance, subversion, and so forth. The findings have been as

I say, absolutely zero.

BUTLER: Well I have the Senate Hearings before me and I think what I have in front of me refutes precisely every statement that you have just made. For instance, who is the Honorary Chairman of the Fair Play for Cuba

Committee?

OSWALD: The honorary Chairman of this Committee, -- the name of that person I certainly don't know.

BUTLER: Well, let me tell you, in case you don't know about your own organization.

OSWALD: No. I know about it.

BUTLER: His name is Waldo Frank and I'm quoting from the "New Masses" Sept. 1932. The title of his articles, 'How I Came to Communism - A Symposium' by Waldo Frank - 'Where I stand and How I got There'. Now let me ask you a second question. Who is the Secretary for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee? The national secretary?

OSWALD: Well we have a National Director who is Mr. V. T. Lee, who was recently returned from Cuba and, because of the fact that the U.S. government has imposed restrictions on travel to Cuba, he is now under indictment for his traveling to Cuba. This, however, is very convenient for rightest organizations to drag out this or that literature purporting to show a fact that has not been established in law. I say that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee has definitely been investigated. That is very true, but I will also say that the total result of the investigation was zero. That is, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is not now on the Attorney General's Subversive List. Any other material you may have is superfluitous(sic).

BUTLER: Oh it is?

SLATTER: Mr. Oswald, if I may break in now a moment I believe it was mentioned that you at one time asked to renounce you American citizenship and become a Soviet citizen, is that correct?

OSWALD: Well I don't think that has particular import to this discussion. We are discussing Cuban-American relations.

SLATTER: Well, I think it has bearing to this extent Mr. Oswald you say apparently that Cuba is not dominated by Russia and yet you apparently, by your own past actions have shown that you have an affinity for Russia and perhaps communism, although I don't know that you admit that you either are a communist or have been, could you straighten out that part? Are you or have you ever been a communist?

OSWALD: Well I answered that prior to this program, on another radio program.

STUCKEY: Are you a Marxist?

OSWALD: Yes, I am a Marxist.

BUTLER: What's the difference?

OSWALD: The difference is primarily the difference between a country like Guinea, Ghana, Yugoslavia, China or Russia. Very, very great differences. Differences which we appreciate by giving aid, let's say to Yugoslavia in the sum of a hundred million or so dollars a year.

BUTLER: That's extraneous, what's the difference?

OSWALD: The difference is as I have said, a very great difference. Many parties, many countries are based on Marxism. Many countries such as Great Britain display very socialistic aspects or characteristics. I might point to the socialized medicine in Britain.

BUTLER: I was speaking of ----

SLATTER: Gentlemen I'll have to interrupt, Well be back in a moment to continue this kind of lively discussion after this message.

COMMERCIAL

SLATTER: Tonight Bill Stuckey and I are talking to three guests, Lee Harvey Oswald, who is the local secretary of a group called Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and with Ed Butler the Executive Vice-President of the Information Council of the Americas (INCA) and Carlos Bringuier a Cuban refugee and obviously anti-Castro. Mr. Oswald as you might have imagined is on the hot seat tonight. I believe you Bill Stuckey have a question.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald I believe you said in a reply to a question of Mr. Butler's that any question about your background were extraneous to the discussion tonight. I disagree because of the fact that you're refusing to reveal any of the other members of your organization, so you are the face of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans. Therefore anybody who might be interested in this organization ought to know more about you. For this reason I'm curious to know just how you supported yourself during the three years that you lived in the Soviet Union. Did you have a government subsidy?

OSWALD: Well. As I er, well -- I will answer that question directly then as you will not rest until you get your answer. I worked in Russia. I was not under the protection of the -- that is to say I was not under protection of the American government, but as I was at all times considered an American citizen I did not lose my American citizenship.

SLATTER: Did you say that you wanted to at one time though? What happened?

OSWALD: Well it's a long drawn out situation in which permission to live in the Soviet Union being granted to a foreign resident is rarely given. This calls for certain amount of technicality, technical papers and so forth. At no time, as I say, did I renounce my citizenship or attempt to renounce my citizenship, and at no time was I out of contact with the American embassy.

BUTLER: Excuse me, may I interrupt just one second. Either one of these two statements is wrong. The Washington Evening Star of Oct. 31, 1959 page 1 reported that Lee Harvey Oswald a former Marine, 4936 Connally St., Ft. Worth, Texas has turned in his passport at the American Embassy in Moscow on that same date and it says that he had applied for Soviet citizenship. Now it seems to me that you've renounced your American citizenship if you've turned in your passport.

OSWALD: Well the obvious answer to that is that I am back in the United States. A person who renounces his citizenship becomes legally disqualified for return to the U.S.

BUTLER: Right. And 'Soviet authorities -- this is from the Washington Post and Times Herald of Nov. 16 1959 - Soviet authorities have refused to grant it although they informed him he could live in Russia as a resident alien'. What did you do in the two weeks from Oct. 31, to Nov. 16, 1959?

OSWALD: As I have already stated, of course, this whole conversation, and we don't have too much time left, is getting away from the Cuban-American problem. However, I am quite willing to discuss myself for the remainder of this program. As I stated it is very difficult for a resident alien, for a foreigner to get permission to reside in the Soviet Union. During those two weeks and during the dates you mentioned I was of course with the knowledge of the American Embassy, getting this permission.

BUTLER: Were you ever at a building at 11 Kuznyetskoya St. in Moscow?

OSWALD: Kuznyetskoya? Kuznyetskoya is -- well that would probably be the Foreign Ministry I assume. No I was never in that place, although I know Moscow having lived there.

SLATER: Excuse me. Let me interrupt here. I think Mr. Oswald is right to this extent. We shouldn't get to lose sight of the organization of which he is the head in New Orleans, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

OSWALD: The Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

SLATTER: As a practical matter knowing as I'm sure you do the sentiment in America against Cuba, we of course severed diplomatic relations sometime ago. I would say Castro is about as unpopular as anybody in the world in this country. As a practical matter what do you hope to gain for your work? How do you hope to bring about what you call "Fair Play for Cuba", knowing the sentiment?

OSWALD: The principals of thought of the Fair Play for Cuba consist of restoration of diplomatic trade and tourist relations with Cuba. That is one of our main points. We are for that. I disagree that this situation regarding American-Cuban relations is very unpopular. We are in the minority surely. We are not particularly interested in what Cuban exiles or rightists members of rightist organizations have to say. We are primarily interested in the attitude of the U.S. government toward Cuba. And in that way we are striving to get the United States to adopt measures which would be more friendly toward the Cuban people and the new Cuban regime in that country. We are not all communist controlled regardless of the fact that I have the experience of living in Russia, regardless of the fact that we have been investigated, regardless of those facts, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is an independent organization not affiliated with any other organization. Our aims and our ideals are very clear and in the best keeping with American traditions of democracy.

BRINGUIER: Do you agree with Fidel Castro when in his last speech of July 26th of this year he qualified President John F. Kennedy of the United States as a ruffian and a thief? Do you agree with Mr. Castro?

OSWALD: I would not agree with that particular wording. However, I and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee do think that the United States Government through certain agencies, mainly the State Department and the C.I.A., has made monumental mistakes in its relations with Cuba. Mistakes which are pushing Cuba into the sphere of activity of let's say a very dogmatic communist country such as China.

SLATTER: Mr. Oswald would you agree that when Castro first took power -- would you agree that the United States was very friendly with Castro, that the people of this country had nothing but admiration for him, that they were very glad to see Batista thrown out?

OSWALD: I would say that the activities of the United States government in regards to Batista were a manifestation of not so much support for Fidel Castro but rather a withdrawal of support from Batista. In other words we stopped armaments to Batista. What we should have been done was to take those armaments and drop them into the Sierra Maestra where Fidel Castro could have used them. As for public sentiment at that time, I think even before the revolution, there were rumblings of official comment and so forth from government officials er, against Fidel Castro.

BUTLER: You've never been to Cuba, of course, but why are the people of Cuba starving today?

OSWALD: Well any country emerging from a semi-colonial state and embarking upon reforms which require a diversification of agriculture you are going to have shortages. After all 80% of imports into the United States from Cuba were two products, tobacco and sugar. Nowadays, while Cuba is reducing its production as far as sugar cane goes it is striving to grow unlimited, and unheard of for Cuba, quantities of certain vegetables such as sweet potatoes, lima beans, cotton, and so forth, so that they can become agriculturally independent ...

SLATTER: Gentlemen I'm going to have to interrupt you. Our time is almost up. We've had three guests tonight on Conversation Carte Blanche, Bill Stuckey and I have been talking to Lee Harvey Oswald, Secretary of the New Orleans Chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Ed Butler, Executive Vice-President of the Information Council of the Americas (INCA) and Carlos Bringuier, Cuban refugee. Thank you very much.