

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Michael Shakman

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # IS-A-L-2008-009

Michael Shakman, for whom the Shakman Decrees that addressed patronage practices in Chicago and Cook County was named, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: February 15, 2008 Location: Mr. Shakman's law office in Chicago, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston Mass.

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 51 Total Time: 2 hr, 39 min / 2.65 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 3/19/2008.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Michael Shakman, *Illinois Statecraft*, IS-A-L-2008-009

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Michael Shakman, for whom the famous Shakman decree is named, was born on August 31, 1942 in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago, and later in Wilmette, IL. He attended college and law school at the University of Chicago, then went into private law practice in Chicago. He also became involved in independent legal organizations, and defended several protesters who were arrested during riots at the Democratic Convention of 1968. In 1969 Shakman ran for a delegate seat to the 1970 Illinois Constitutional Convention, but fought a losing battle against the Democratic Party's patronage system in Chicago, then dominated by Mayor Richard J. Daley. During the election, he and co-plaintiff, Paul M. Lurie, filed suit against the City of Chicago and various Cook County Democratic organizations. The law suit claimed that the party's patronage system worked in ways that made it very difficult for an independent to be elected, thus violated his constitutional rights of equal protection under the law. His initial suit was dismissed, but on appeal, the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed with the dismissal and returned the case to the trial court for adjudication. The case continued for the next 14 years and resulted in two consent decrees that prohibited the defendants (City of Chicago and other local governmental organizations) from firing or hiring employees based on their political affiliation or activities. Together, these decrees dramatically changed the old patronage system in Chicago.

Shakman also discussed the Chicago political scandals of the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the "hired truck" scandal and the conviction of Donald Tomczak and Robert Sorich, both high ranking city employees, for mail fraud. He discussed the continued persistence of patronage despite the decrees, and his hopes and aspirations for the future.

Topics Covered: Democratic National Convention of 1968; Chicago Council of Lawyers; Independent Voters of Illinois; Chicago Democratic party machine; Chicago patronage; Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1970; Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz; Judge Nicholas Bua; Justice Walter V. Schaeffer; Mayor Richard J. Daley; Paul M. Lurie, C. Richard Johnson; Roger Fross; Robert Plotkin; Shakman I ('Firing' Consent Decree) ; Shakman II ('Hiring' Consent Decree); Mayor Jayne Byrne; Mayor Harold Washington; Mary Lee Leahy; Rutan decision; Mayor Richard M. Daley; Donald Tomczak; Robert Sorich; Hispanic Democratic Organization; Judge Julia Nowicki

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