

The Man Who Bought Route 128

Chapter 3, Getting Sued and Other Tales of the Engineering Life
Richard L. Meehan

Richard Meehan's recounting of the corruption of Thomas Worcester and its subsequent adverse consequences describes one of the greatest occupational hazards facing civil engineers. Because much of the work of civil engineers revolves around projects involving large sums of money and because the process of securing contracts for completion of these projects seems, at times, to be totally irrational and carried out with total disregard for the engineer's professional ability, the temptations to circumvent the process by exerting extraordinary influence, by monetary means if necessary, are sometimes overwhelming.

Unfortunately--as if succumbing to these temptations is not, in itself, bad enough--circumventing the system to get a contract is usually not the end of the nefarious undertaking, but only the beginning. As Thomas Worcester learned, the demands for money and favors seldom end when the contract has been secured. Honest and competent performance of the engineering work once the contract has been secured (which is often all the engineer ever wanted from the outset) is usually not an important consideration to others who participate in such schemes, and the engineer often finds his or her ability to carry out professional responsibilities has been compromised.

Cases such as the Thomas Worcester case need to be studied carefully by anyone who is considering a career as a civil engineering consultant.

By all accounts I have heard, Thomas Worcester was a gentleman and a fine engineer, a worthy successor to his father, who some years ago had established the Boston consulting engineering firm of Thomas A. Worcester, Inc. Indeed, most New Englanders are well acquainted with the defunct firm's work without necessarily being aware of it, for Worcester's green steel bridges and turnpike cuts and fills are a functional if inconspicuous part of the Massachusetts landscape. Worcester himself was a Harvard man, gray suited and dignified, hardly distinguishable from the investment bankers and lawyers who walk with brisk dignity on Federal and Milk streets. He was a proper Bostonian, what my family would describe, not without some admiration, as a Yankee. And a successful one at that, for after the war, when that particular breed had weakened and many old Boston businesses were on the decline, the Worcester engineering firm was booming, growing in the late 1940's from a few dozen to over two hundred employees.

The success of Worcester's firm during those lean years was based in part on the widely recognized quality of its work. Worcester's resume included \$100 million of successful wartime government contracts, and one of his new Route 128 bridges had won a national prize for its design. The firm's success was less obviously but undeniably attributable to a man named Frank Norton, whom Worcester hired in the late 1940's. Norton's calling card described him as assistant to the president, and the assistance he provided concerned that most delicate aspect of the consulting engineering business, which those of us in it frequently describe to our clients as "business development" but discuss among ourselves as "getting jobs." As I well know, having been at it some ten years, it

is a constant source of worry, for consulting work is subject to the worst feasts and famines and is highly competitive besides. How often we find ourselves having hired and trained a large and fine staff to complete projects in hand, only then to find the work dry up so we are faced with the prospect of laying off those people we have trained and to whom we have become attached. Or worse, watching the firm's debts pile up while we maintain our staff, anxiously hoping for the arrival of a big new contract. And of course, beyond the goal of corporate stability, there are those little prickles of ambition, the firm of one hundred employees instead of only ten, the invitations to be keynote speaker at conferences or to testify at important hearings, pricey schools like Milton and Beaver Country Day for the children, the teak sailboat at Marblehead.

According to well-established canons of professional behavior, civil engineering consultants, like architects and lawyers, are supposed to be selected for public work on the basis of quality and reputation, through a gentlemanly process of discussion and negotiation, not by grubby competitive bidding. After all, the cheapest fee is not likely to yield the best design. Yet it is sad but true that in the absence of bidding, the selection process sometimes boils down to a matter of personal influence, contacts, favors, or even worse.

So when in the late 1940's a highly political official named William F. Callahan recaptured the post of Massachusetts state director of public works, traditionally known as a most powerful position because of the broad authority of the director in awarding contracts, it became essential that firms like Worcester's establish contacts with Callahan. And Frank Norton was the link, for as Worcester would later recall in court, Norton was "certain he could get the jobs for me because he knew Callahan." Norton was hired at a good salary and given a generous expense account. There are, of course, certain expenses that go along with such a key position as assistant to the president--dinner with clients and cronies at Jimmy's Harborside, an occasional trip to Florida to work out details.

And just as he had promised, Frank Norton began to deliver the jobs in the form of contracts from the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. One was a real plum: the design of the first eighteen miles of Boston's new peripheral highway, Route 128, which included forty-four bridges.

Meanwhile Frank Norton's expenses were as impressive as the contracts he brought in. During one period when Norton delivered \$2,750,000 in new engineering work, his expenses amounted to \$275,000, or exactly 10 percent of the contract amount. True, sales costs of 10 percent are not entirely out of line in most businesses, including consulting engineering. But what was troublesome was that Norton needed the money in cash, vaguely promising but never providing an account of its disposition.

As owners of small firms well know, getting hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash out of a company is difficult unless the cash is recorded as going to some legitimate subcontractor, supplier, or landlord or unless it is paid out as taxable salary or dividends to the company officers. The company check registers are, after all, subject to audit by IRS tax agents, who are not likely to accept, without further explanation, some \$275,000 in checks written to petty cash or to someone's cousin for interior decorating services. Like so many others who have found themselves in this awkward position, Thomas Worcester began to "borrow" a little money from the firm here and there, to

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tide things over. There was, of course, no going back, and it was not long before the distraught engineer was writing corporate checks to companies and employees who did not exist, then cashing them himself, delivering the bundles of tens and twenties to Norton. Did Worcester, we ask now, really know what was happening to this money? From what he later told me, I would assume he did; but Norton was good enough not to trouble Worcester, a gentleman, with unsavory details. He just delivered the jobs, as they had agreed.

If Thomas Worcester will emerge from the end of this story ennobled by tragedy, Norton is but a minor player, dead now twenty-seven years. But as I reflect on the fragments of court testimony that I have read and on the story that Worcester himself told me one rainy afternoon in his office, I am compelled to pause for a moment, for I feel an odd sympathy for Francis C. Norton, whose name is, I suppose, appearing here in print for the last time ever. In these righteous, post-Watergate days, we are much inclined to moralize, perhaps superficially, on the conduct of men like Frank Norton. But perhaps the Nortons of the world smile at our moral naiveté. Perhaps they say to themselves, "You, hypocrites all, are comfortable with your lying and thievery, because they conform to the standards of your peers. But we see you in ways you would never dare to see yourselves. For we are the boundary mediators, ambassadors, Indian scouts. We alone have the courage to slip through that perilous no-man's land between your petty clans. It is a lonely calling, but not without honor."

There is a detail of Norton's demise that touches me. There had been a minor stroke, a chronic heart condition. Frank was not in good health. The pressures were slowly bringing him down, affecting his arteries. A fragment of court testimony harshly illuminates the beginning of the end. The scene was a friend's house, a Judge Charles Flynn's, a few days after Christmas 1951. A children's Christmas party went on in the background, and Flynn poured Norton a stiff drink. Norton had hired Flynn as a lawyer to represent the Worcester firm. The IRS had begun to breathe down Worcester's neck.

"I feel better," said Norton, sipping the drink, his second.

"It's going badly," said Flynn.

"For who?" asked Norton.

"You know for who. It's going badly for the Worcester Company. And for you."

"For me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll take care of that," said Norton, rising to leave.

Who among us does not know how sad New Year's Day can be when matters go badly! I imagine Norton sitting at his dining room table, that first day of 1952, staring at his tax returns. It was going badly, and it was up to Frank to take care of it. And he did. Mrs. Norton found him there later that day, slumped over the papers, dead of a heart attack.

If Thomas Worcester had felt some discomfort at the act of passing money to Norton, he must have found it that much more distressing to wrap up the bills in an A&P grocery bag and pay a call to the Norton household. For with or without Frank, certain scheduled payments were due nonetheless; without Frank around and until some other arrangements could be made, it had been decided that Mrs. Norton would have to handle matters. As Worcester had expected, there was another guest at the Norton home when he arrived one evening on his distasteful errand, and although he never saw the man--he had stepped out of the room for a moment when Worcester arrived--Worcester testified that Mrs. Norton had explained that the overcoat hanging in the hall, into which she put the packet of money, belonged to William F. Callahan.

As time passed, the fat public contracts on which the Worcester firm was now becoming dependent began to bring other obligations, other favors for Worcester to perform. There were the out-of-office politicians like Ed Rowe. Somebody in high Democratic party circles had decided that Ed Rowe should be a Republican candidate for governor, a spoiler, to split the Republican election effort; to further this, Worcester hired Rowe for \$20,000 to assist in representing the firm. And certain political lawyers, like Henry Santuososso, who had to call Worcester's office one day to ask what the firm's records showed his \$10,000 legal consultation was supposed to have been about. A certain city councilor, who was paid \$50 a week for seventy-seven weeks for doing nothing. A firm called Public Relations, Inc., hired for \$29,000 to "stand by."

One day, an associate would later recall, Worcester just buried his face in his hands. "It's got to be stopped if we're going to keep business going . . . it's almost impossible to do business today without somebody looking for something," said the unhappy engineer.

If we're going to keep business going. The responsibility for enterprise, that moral imperative accepted so eagerly by those engaged in business, entirely overlooked by those who are not, with the result that this fundamental and recurrent rationale is almost always overlooked by both sides in any debate of the ethics of shortcutting the legal and bureaucratic system.

Those readers who are unaccustomed to the ways of big cities in the East should recognize that what I have described so far was, and for all I know still is, the normal manner of doing public business in Boston, just as it is and probably always will be in Bangkok and Honolulu and Accra. This was no secret. As recently as two years before Norton's employment by Worcester, James Michael Curley had taken office for the fourth time as Boston's mayor. On election day, Curley was under indictment for his acts as president of an organization known as the Engineers Group, Inc., a business promotion enterprise started by an ex-convict friend of Curley's to peddle war contracts to engineers. The mayor's election-winning slogan was "Curley gets things done"; but whatever the mayor elect got done for the first five months of his mayoral term had to be done from Danbury prison where he was simultaneously serving a jail term for mail fraud. This was not the first occasion Curley had done time while in public office; indeed the veteran politician had capitalized politically on an earlier jail sentence--he had taken a civil service exam to help a friend--and his authorized biography, **The Purple Shamrock**, which Curley gave as a gift to his admirers, indicated that "there wasn't a contract awarded that did not have a cut for Curley."

This kind of corruption was condemned by proper Yankee Boston, but the continued political success of Curleys and Callahans proved that the majority of voters romanticized their behavior, many considering the shakedowns of businesses like Worcester's as a kind of retroactive tax on past injustices perpetrated by the Boston brahmins on poor immigrants. Who couldn't remember a sweet Irish aunt or grandmother who had scrubbed the floors of fine houses on Beacon Hill? And wasn't that Yankee moralizing really just sheer hypocrisy? "They all paid him--the banks and the utilities and the rest," one of Curley's underlings would recall when Curley had passed from the scene. "But who were the ones who did the paying? All of them, old Yankees." Not only was Yankee justice, encoded in those abstract and unintelligible leather-bound tomes in which the evil spirit of Cromwell still lurked, basically slanted to favor the established rule over the people, but worse yet, even the Yankees themselves cheated when it suited their purposes.

If James Michael Curley remains in public memory as the last of the flamboyant Boston bosses, observers of the Massachusetts scene agreed that the state's real power broker during the postwar years was its elusively quiet but iron-willed director of public works, later chairman of the State Turnpike Authority, William F. Callahan. Callahan, into whose overcoat pocket Thomas Worcester said he had seen his money disappear, was Boston's Robert Moses the man who really got things done, whose political power was such that he never lost a vote in the state legislature. The son of a shoe factory worker, Callahan had earlier lost his public works job during a shakeup initiated by the Republican Governor Saltonstall in the 1930's but recovered his position when the Democrats came back to power in the late 1940's.

Like most other men in our suburban Newton neighborhood, Bill Callahan had worked hard. He had built an organization that had accomplished visible works. "There is a certain pride in building bridges, building roads," he said. The Callahans lived in a fine white house; one of my secret schoolboy shortcuts went through a grove of forsythia at the back of their ample lot. He was a balding, jowly Irishman. A cancer operation left him without a larynx, but with great difficulty and characteristic determination he learned to speak through a hole in his chest. "In 1952 I had my throat cut by a doctor. I've had it cut in other ways many times since," he said. The Callahans had lost a son, Bill Jr., in World War II. He was inclined to spoil his daughter, Jane. She married a Johnny Kelley. Callahan hired a firm called Highway Traffic Engineers, Inc. to work on the Massachusetts Turnpike on the condition that half the firm's stock go to Johnny and that he be paid a salary of \$20,000 a year. Kelley's principal contribution to the firm seems to have been attendance at the annual shareholder's meeting. The Kelleys lived in Wellesley, which is even nicer than Newton.

The several reformers who had set out to topple Callahan from his position discovered a crafty and determined opponent. One crime commission lawyer recalled the Callahan style: "He was able to see to it that business was placed in the hands of persons from all walks of life, sometimes on a very thin basis as far as return services were concerned, and he was able to combine the natural

* Robert Moses, a contemporary of Callahan's, was Coordinator of Construction for New York City.

loyalty which arises out of a financial relationship of that kind with a particular skill in appealing to the variety of persons who were the subject of his benefaction. His sources of communication were remarkable. He was able to find out what every man cared about, and somehow, directly, or indirectly, to appeal to those desires."

Snooping investigators were never physically threatened but they were audited, received strange calls and callers, fed anonymous leads and tips that later proved false, which led to blind alleys, and which made them appear foolish to the public or within their profession. "The shots that were fired by this remarkable man were of a subtle and perceptive kind and created an atmosphere of embarrassment, confusion, and uncertainty which tended to sap one's resolve," said one prosecutor.

And yet William Callahan was said to live a clean personal life. He did not drink or smoke or even play golf. He was a man who loved work, politics, and family. His interest ran to power, and he made a clean distinction between power and knowledge. Of those critics, especially academic critics, who opposed his high-handed methods, he said, "You've got to have critics. But usually they're people who haven't accomplished anything in their lives. I call them grocery-store philosophers, pen pushers."

One of the critics Callahan most definitely had in mind was a lean, lawyerish-looking young MIT professor of civil engineering, A. Shleffer Lang, who in my junior year there had allied himself with some Harvard Law School people to oppose one of Callahan's pet projects, the extension of the Massachusetts Turnpike into central Boston. One can imagine and even sympathize with the aesthetic objection to ramming a huge, reinforced-concrete, traffic-bearing structure right into the heart of Richardson's and Olmsted's Boston. There is, it has always seemed to me, a fundamental issue of quality, of taste, to be considered in these matters. But it is a characteristic of our times that these public questions cannot be debated in terms of quality; perhaps such terms carry excessively aristocratic associations. It becomes necessary instead to demonstrate that the offensively crude is fiscally irresponsible or that it constitutes a health hazard. So in opposing the project, the professors used the same arguments of financial irresponsibility used by the Saltonstall commission that had fired Callahan back in the 1930s. In the spring of my junior year, their anti-turnpike campaign, which had culminated in a series of public advertisements opposing the project, successfully frightened Wall Street investment bankers from purchasing \$175 million in bonds for the proposed extension.

If Callahan was furious with the interference of these "pen-pushing" Harvard and MIT professors, by the end of that same year he had encountered an even more determined enemy. This was Judge Charles E. Wyzanski of the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts, who had taken on the 1960 tax fraud case of *United States v. Thomas Worcester* after a previous judge, William McCarthy, had been too busy to try the case in the last three years before his retirement. Wyzanski's starchy disapproval of Massachusetts politicians and their methods was well known. The judge was fond of comparing, for didactic purposes in his prep school commencement speeches, the righteousness of Massachusetts's earliest governor, John Winthrop, with the depravity of its recent governor, Curley. Presented with a tax-evasion conviction of consulting engineer Thomas Worcester, Wyzanski seized this opportunity to "sound a clarion," as

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he described his own actions, to expose the corruption that was rotting what he imagined had once been a commonwealth of honorable men. He accordingly offered Worcester a deal: in exchange for suspension of the eighteen-month jail sentence that the engineer had received for evading taxes on \$180,000 of illegitimate payoffs, Worcester agreed to testify with complete candor on the disposition of the "Worcester bounty," as the judge called the payoffs and favors that the engineering firm had so liberally dispersed in return for public contracts. Wyzanski's purpose was nothing less than exposing a statewide "network of corruption," which included public officials at all levels of the state, along with the other institutions--banks, insurance firms, the press, and the bar--extending even to members of the judiciary, for he believed that all of them were, with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm, participants in the system of bribery and extortion. Worcester, whom Wyzanski said had "completely persuaded me of his decency," agreed to testify in order to avoid jail, and for several months in the fall of 1960, Wyzanski, in an unusual series of hearings, used Worcester's testimony as a starting point for a major exposé of the corruption rooted in the Massachusetts system of public works, and most specifically in that perennial soft spot, the award of engineering and insurance service contracts by Callahan's Turnpike Authority. For three months, Wyzanski subpoenaed and exposed state officials, including Callahan himself, to the questioning of both Worcester's attorneys and the U.S. attorney, Elliot Richardson.

Predictably, Wyzanski's efforts were harshly criticized in some sectors of the press, perhaps even more so in the streets and bars, after Sunday mass and over corned beef dinners in Boston's predominantly Irish neighborhoods. The ethnicity of the name was unclear--was he a Catholic or a Jew?--but the affiliations were soon enough revealed. Wyzanski had attended the prestigious Exeter Academy, then gone on to Harvard. He was a member of Boston's Signet and Tavern clubs, was prone to sprinkle his college and prep school commencement speeches with references to Pericles and Locke and Wordsworth, to reminisce about his Exeter friends, boys with names like Francis Plimpton and Dudley Orr and John Cowles. Whatever he was, Catholic or Jew, one thing was clear enough about this Wyzanski he was trying to pass himself off as a Yankee.

Indeed they were all Harvard men: Worcester, Wyzanski, and Richardson. Elliott Richardson had been a legislative assistant to the same Governor Saltonstall who in 1939 had dismissed Callahan from his public works position for squandering public funds. Richardson's career and affiliations had been a carbon copy of Wyzanski's; both had graduated from the same school, clerked for the same justice, Learned Hand, and been associated for many years with the oldest Yankee law firm in the city. Were these not grounds to think that Wyzanski was Richardson's mentor?

Surely this highly publicized hearing, initiated by Richardson and blessed by Wyzanski, had a larger purpose than adjudication of the trivial question of whether Thomas Worcester's probation should be revoked. Clearly it was an attempt to try the political system of the state, an assault on the institutions of family and church, a campaign to undercut the personal loyalty that protected people from exploitation by the traditionally powerful Yankee establishment. Wasn't this only an extension of the communist subversion of American ideals, which--as Senator McCarthy and others had shown in the early 1950's--was infecting institutions like Harvard and MIT? And who could

ignore the fact that it was an election year, that Bobby Kennedy was already searching Cambridge for candidates for high-level federal posts? Wasn't Wyzanski, who had served with John Kennedy as a Harvard overseer, really just creating a little election year publicity for himself, perhaps bucking for a Kennedy appointment? Could it not be said that behind that Harvard mask of righteousness there lurked more in the way of personal ambitions than Judge Wyzanski would care to admit?

If men of action like Bill Callahan cut corners to get things moving, took care of their families and friends, spread the work around to the small people, what of it? Consider that Callahan had been accused, in which his public relations man called "Mr Wyzanski's Nazi trial," of pushing turnpike insurance business toward friends among the fifty-four insurance brokers who were members of the state legislature. But why shouldn't he? Callahan pointed out how when the Republicans were in office, the big, old-line insurance companies got the business. "The little fellows didn't get a look. Somebody has to get the insurance business. And it don't cost you any more whether you insure through John Smith or Mike McCarty." The difference was that Mike McCarty, barely getting along with six kids, would remember the favor when it came time to vote. John Smith--or Thomas Worcester--offered money, not loyalty.

That same fall I had finally reached the relatively safe anchorage of my senior year at MIT. It was a presidential election year, and for those of us from Boston a year of paradoxical choices. Presidential candidate Richard Nixon, coming from that land of pinko lotus-eaters, California, was a staunch anticommunist. John Kennedy, grandson of a Boston mayor said to have been even more corrupt than Curley, was a liberal who sat with Judge Wyzanski on Harvard's Board of Overseers. And yet it was Bill Callahan, not Charles Wyzanski, who was invited to Kennedy's private birthday party; Callahan sold most of the fund-raising advertisements on the souvenir menu. Neither presidential candidate measured up to my standards of honor. Friday evenings, at my proletarian hangout, the Paradise Cafe, I defiantly played the pinball machine instead of watching the televised debate. Why vote, I would say to my parents, when the choice is between two phonies like that?

It was the year in which I was too cynical to participate in the new dance craze, the twist, but earnest enough to criticize our unfair play toward Castro's new Cuba. Like most of my classmates, I was resigned to compulsory military service after graduation, but there would be plenty of good jobs waiting after that. It was 1960, and progress was still an important word. The first commercial nuclear power plant had just been licensed. A couple of young engineers were starting a new company called Teledyne. The laser, the felt-tip pen, and Enovid were perfected that year, and the space race would go on. Few things were as bright as the future of technology.

With the exception of one structural design course, MIT seemed easy to me that fall. I wrote a FORTRAN computer program that aimed to beat Fats, the bookmaker at the Paradise (it did not); studied the strength of the building materials of the future, foam core aluminum panels and fiberglass-reinforced plastic; broke asphalt cylinders in the basement of Building One. For the fun of it, I took two humanities courses. One was taught by a wickedly funny visitor, John Hawkes, whose novels were just coming out as New Directions

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paperbacks. The other, a course in moral philosophy, was taught by Yale philosopher John Rawls. I did not understand much of the scholarly Rawls, about whom a book has recently been published, **Understanding Rawls**. Rawls's spare, bespectacled appearance and scholarly manner were just what one would expect of that endangered species, the moral philosopher. Most of the specimens, one gathered from our assigned readings, were to be found in English academic preserves, tut-tutting each other's "fallacies" at croquet or over tea. I soon read enough of G.E. Moore and A. J. Ayer to realize that they would never presume to replace the authority of the church fathers, whom I had chosen to dismiss a few years earlier, thereby creating a gap in my moral sensibility as troublesome as a missing tooth. It seemed to me that the principal concerns of modern ethical philosophers were linguistic; they wanted to define precisely the meaning of the word good in "Bill Callahan is a good man" or should in "Thomas Worcester should have demanded an account of Norton's expenses." I gathered that one school of philosophical thought had gone so far as to declare that such moral statements had no meaning whatsoever; *should* and *good* in their view were no more than animal grunts of approval. If this were true, then of course these Harvard lawyers and Boston Irish pols were no more than two clans of peeled apes, screeching at each other across the Charles River, and Thomas Worcester's only wrong was the practical mistake of trying to operate across tribal boundaries. Or perhaps, in accordance with Immanuel Kant's basic and to me more sensible rule, a man would be right provided only that he acted as if he willed his actions to be universal laws. In that case, wouldn't Callahan and Wyzanski, each of whom would be content presumably to live in a world of their own values, both be logically "right"? Then only Worcester, whose respectability did not match his conduct, would be wrong. Could it be that the existence of diverse hardy ethnic subgroups, each with its own "operational code," provided a benevolent ecological stability to Massachusetts, a political state which might be preferable to mass anomie, to spells of weak leadership broken by periodic revolutionary violence? Was honesty to be expected in a true leader? "Our rulers will find a considerable dose of falsehood and deceit necessary for the good of their subjects," said Socrates. It was all very confusing, from an ethical standpoint. Now in leafing through my twenty-year-old text for Rawls's moral philosophy course, Sellars and Hospers's **Readings in Ethical Theory**, seven hundred pages sturdily bound, I am pleased to find that I underlined the following statement, which still best expresses my retrospective findings on the practical applications of moral philosophy: "It is therefore very easy when we investigate these matters philosophically to go wrong because we do not have before us at the time a genuine ethical experience, and at the very moment when we have such an experience we are too much concerned with it as a practical issue to philosophize about it."

Spring term of 1961 was my last at MIT, and as the putty-colored limestone buildings of the institute began to warm in the April sun and the grass of the quadrangle grew thick and green, I began to feel a sense of lightheartedness that I had not known since high school summer vacations. For me the struggle for grade-point averages was over; the last lion, "Structural Analysis and Design," was replaced by a lamb, "Social and Political Factors in Engineering." Said to be a gut course, it was taught by the same Professor Lang who earlier had tangled with William Callahan on the turnpike extension bond issue. Lang's aim was to expose us to some of the nontechnical problems that engineers are famous for not recognizing. I had been following the Worcester case in the newspapers, and when I suggested that as a course

project I undertake a study of the scandal, Lang told me that would be an excellent idea. I accordingly called Worcester's attorney, Calvin Bartlett, and explained my interest in the case. Bartlett invited me to his office and gave me a large cardboard box full of court transcripts. When I asked him a question about Worcester's attitude, Bartlett suggested that I ask Worcester himself, picked up the phone, and called the engineer. Would Worcester talk to me? The answer was apparently yes. Bartlett asked me what day would be convenient for me the following week and set up an appointment.

So it happened one rainy spring afternoon that I took the MTA downtown to visit Thomas Worcester. I was nervous and wore what seemed to me to be an appropriately funereal charcoal suit and dark blue tie. It was a blustery day and by the time I found the correct street address, my London Fog raincoat and suit pants were soaked.

In the cramped lobby of one of the older buildings in Boston's financial district, I found one of those glass-encased, black felt building directories on which press-on letters indicated that what remained of the Worcester firm occupied the fifth floor. A fifty-foot ascent in a creaking elevator and a short walk down a linoleum corridor brought me to a heavy oak and glass door. Inside a male secretary greeted me suspiciously, then escorted me through a series of empty offices with dusty drafting tables to Worcester's office. Worcester greeted me like a gentleman, and we sat talking for an hour or so. My recollection is of a tall, stooped man with a starched white shirt, who seemed tired but glad to tell me the story, much as I have told it here. It seemed to me then as it does now that Worcester, of all of them, on a purely logical basis had committed the most grievous wrong. And yet Worcester that afternoon had a certain stoic way about him, a certain dignity that elevated him, the one man who had actually been convicted, above all of the others, including the righteous Wyzanski and the determined Callahan. It was, I suppose as I look back on it now, residual traces of Catholicism in me that made Worcester's judgments carry a certain high authority, for only he among the many sinners had done penance. I believed, moreover, that Worcester's trial had yielded a good, that Massachusetts politics would never be the same.

Only once that afternoon did that cool Yankee seem bitter, and that anger was directed at his fellow engineers, who had put him out of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers for his conduct. "They denounced me and yet they all conduct their business the same way," he said.

After he talked, Worcester accompanied me to the door, we shook hands, and I walked out into the thickening gloom. Worcester and the male secretary had been the only people on the fifth floor of the building. Walking back to Park Street, past the slate stones of Granary Burying Ground glistening black in the rain, the realization came to me that Worcester's only reason for coming to the office that day may have been to talk to me.