

## **Michael R. Lemov**

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### **“I Have Always Had the Power”**

Michael R. Lemov explains an interaction between the House Commerce Committee chairman, Harley Staggers, and three subcommittee chairmen, John Moss, John Dingell, Jr., and Paul Rogers.

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Moss had—and Rogers and Dingell had written Staggers. They told him exactly what they wanted, and why they needed it. Long letters, courteous letters, saying they wanted Staggers to be a successful chairman. That they needed him to be around like Oren Harris had been around, not go back to West Virginia on the weekends. And they needed adequate staff and they needed authority to move forward. The chairman had to schedule their subcommittee hearings. You couldn't start work on a bill until Staggers said okay. Either that was tradition or written into the rules. I think it was probably in the rules. He had, he had to use Staggers' staff. Some of whom were good, and some of whom weren't so good. But the main thing is Moss wrote these long letters with Dingell and Rogers telling Staggers why they needed staff, that they had tremendous issues facing the committee, and they simply, you know, urged him to, to change the rules or even change the practice so they had staff, control their own agenda, and they could move, move ahead. His answer was amazing. He said, “It has always been this way.” This is in writing now, in a letter he wrote back to Moss, Dingell, and Rogers, which must have really—which was basically the red flag to a bull—I mean, to three bulls. They were—this was it. Staggers was not going to compromise. He said, “It has always been this way. I have inherited a committee which, where the chairman always works this way. I always have had the power. My predecessors have had the power. I'm not going to change it now. I am like the captain of a, of a ship”—or a football team, he might have mentioned, because was been a football coach. So, Staggers said, “It is almost a moral law.”