INTERVIEW III

DATE: June 30, 1982

INTERVIEWEE: HYMAN BOOKBINDER

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Bookbinder's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start.

B: Well, you're asking me about one of really the most amusing and poignant moments of my whole relationship with the poverty program. I guess it must have been 1965--well, maybe by then it was 1966, I was then the assistant director of I think [it was] called the [Office of] National Councils and Organizations. But Shriver would use me generally as a kind of a buffer to take care of special problems that got created, because of my civil rights background and labor background. Well, one day evidently some angry folks from New Jersey came over from one of the local poverty programs over some difficulty. They weren't getting funded or they had some difficulty and I believe they obtained an appointment. Whether it was an appointment or they just came down, Shriver could not see them or would not see them and asked that I see them, at least to deflect them for a while and see them and listen to their grievance.

There must have been a half dozen or eight men who came down. I invited them into my office. It was a large enough office; they all fitted in my office. After we talked for about an hour or two I got myself briefed on the issue. I forget what the issue is, but it's not relevant to the anecdote. I did the best I could to satisfy them that we are concerned, that we're doing what we can and [made] the usual kind of an attempt to

persuade them that we're serious, we're genuine, we're concerned, but that on this thing maybe there's a disagreement. They announced at one point that they're determined before they go back to get satisfaction, to get a commitment, to get a promise that the problem, whatever it was, would be resolved before they go back. I was beginning to sense that I had a problem on my hands, but they made it [clear] at some point near the end of the afternoon when they said, using the language of the day, "We're going to sit in your office until it's solved." So we're engaged in a sit-in.

They announced that they're sitting in. I wasn't unfamiliar with the idea of sitting in, and I told them that's fine, they're welcome to stay there, but that it would probably not be very productive because it's going to take time to get information, but they're welcome to sit here. And maybe--I said to myself--if I talk enough they'll give up. But they stayed, and they stayed. We talked, and I went back to the phone and did some work.

It was at about, I think, six o'clock or so that I called my wife, started to explain that I'd probably be late or maybe not [home] at all, when she said, "Don't you remember? Amy is home." Amy was my daughter at Brandeis who had come to visit. I hadn't seen her that often that it wasn't important for me to see her. She was in just for the night. She'd come in for a meeting or something, and I wanted very much to see her. I said, "Well, it will just have to be later, but let's see what I can do. If I can get out of it, fine, but I'm not going to leave these men alone in my office with just the janitor of the building. I want to be civil. I want to be with them. If they're here, I'm going to sit in with them." She said, "Well, do the best you can." Then I hung up.

Just instinctively, intuitively, or maybe because that's the kind of person I am, I

immediately thought of something and I went back to the group and I said, "Hey, fellows, I've got a problem on my hands. I just talked to my wife. My daughter is visiting me from Massachusetts. I'd love to be able to go home, but if you're sitting in I'm not going to be able to go home. Does that weigh at all with you or will you reconsider your sitting in?" "No, no, no, no." I guess I must have been half joking when I said it, but I said, "Listen, do you mind sitting in in my house instead of the office? If you want I'll call my wife, we'll put some dinner together; we'll have some dinner. You can continue sitting in in my home." I chuckled as I said it, and I soon saw that they were accepting the idea, at least seriously enough when the leader of the group said, "Give us ten minutes to caucus on it." They came back to me and said, "We accept your invitation." (Laughter)

So we then arranged for transportation. No, I think they had their cars; they had driven there from Jersey so they had cars. I had my car. I called back my wife. We thought it was a marvelous [idea]. First of all, it was really an unusual experience. I knew immediately this is going to become part of my personal folklore about the poverty program. And in good spirit, understanding, cooperation, we were each doing what we had to do. So sure enough, we went back home. My wife had put together some tuna fish or something, soup, and we did feed them and we talked a bit and we talked and we talked. It was good fellowship. They understood that I had to do what I had to do, they had to do what they had to do. We arranged for mattresses or they could sleep on the floor, or I think we could put up two or three of them, but the rest they were just going to. . . . At some point I had gone to sleep. But about one-thirty or two o'clock, they again asked if they could caucus for ten minutes, came back to me and said, "Okay, we've made our point, you've made yours. We're going to drive back now. And we said goodbye,

good fellowship, and that was the end of the incident.

G: Amazing. Let me ask you a bit about the administrative set-up of OEO after the legislation was passed and the program put into effect. How was OEO's administrative structure devised, do you recall?

B: How the OEO itself was?

G: Yes.

B: Well, of course the basic structure obviously followed the major program lines. There were, as you know, in the legislation several major categories. I think it was almost inevitable, I mean it was almost automatic that there would be a Community Action department, there would be a Job Corps division. There would be something that would handle education, congressional relations, *et cetera*. I don't recall at this moment any major struggles over division, but if you can jog my memory about some particular conflicts. I'm trying to recall.

G: I'm not anticipating any struggles, I'm just wondering--well, things for example like the Office of Inspection and research plans, programs and evaluations.

B: Yes. Well, I think each of those things flows naturally almost primarily from Sargent Shriver's ideas about agencies. He's pro-research. To some extent the Peace Corps served as a model for some of the things we did. But he immediately had the help of some people who I think at the time were consultants, people like Jack Conway and others. And in government, he had a lot of friends in--what was it called then?--the Budget Bureau. I guess it was still called the Budget Bureau then, wasn't it? So he had a lot of technical help in putting together the agency, and some of the fellows that were working around him--that doesn't include me, because I had had some government

experience, but I was in no way a government bureaucratic expert--but people who had come from various agencies, including the Peace Corps, understood how to put together an agency. Bill Kelly certainly knew about these things, others did. Much more thought and effort went into figuring out who would do what than what had to be done, and the search for the right people was quite intense. As you know, as the records clearly indicate, a good number of the people came right from the task force and went almost automatically into their respective slots. In my own case, for example, what I had done in the task force I continued to do in a more formal way, which was to serve as a liaison to a wide range of private sector groups. We created a specific OEO assistant directorship for this effort.

G: Was there an emphasis on creating an office, quote unquote, with a small staff rather than a new agency or an administration, or a much larger bureaucracy? Did you feel--?

B: Yes, there were discussions--maybe it's after-the-fact reporting that I'm doing, but I think the premise all along--there were several concurrent premises about what kind of agency it should be. Let me perhaps not be too responsive to the question, let me just talk a little bit about what kind of agency it would be.

First, there was, as you well know, and as we continue to have to struggle with it over the years even after OEO, an insistence that it be in the Executive Office of the President. [There was] the feeling, and I think a very, very wise feeling, that what we're talking about is not only the administration of X number of specific poverty-labeled programs, but that we were to be the spur and the monitor and the examiner, the critic, of the whole range of government affairs, to see that they become more poverty-conscious and do things that will contribute to the War on Poverty. Our OEO programs could not

be considered the whole War on Poverty so therefore, in order for that to be effective, we couldn't be an agency among agencies. We had to be speaking presumably, at least nominally if not actually, in the name of the president, so therefore it had to be part of the Office of the President. Of course, the legislation vindicated, at least supported that notion of the task force. So therefore it was that.

Secondly, if we are going to have an impact on other departments, especially cabinet departments, I think from the beginning at least some of us understood that either while we would engage in some skirmishes with Labor and others as to who runs adult education and who runs Job Corps, that as soon as feasible the programs should be spun off to other agencies. If we are going to serve that purpose of sensitizing and activating other groups, we have to think in terms of looking to them ultimately for the management of programs, but also to engage in programs now that would be helpful, so that therefore we should be looking for backstopping and for support immediately from other agencies, creating our own offices and staffs to the extent necessary, but not too much so.

Thirdly, and here I came into this picture, have the programs created, designed and funded by Washington, but to the greatest extent possible administered elsewhere. Now, the elsewhere could be local and state governments, it could be other federal departments, or it could be hundreds or thousands of private agencies operating around the country who wanted to get into the act and be sponsors, be contractors, be grantees and whatever it may be. Of course, that's the way the program did in fact get set up. The most dramatic, if perhaps too frequently cited illustration is that within a matter literally of weeks or is it two months, there were two thousand separate sponsors of Head Start in that first summer. Two thousand as a result of a circular letter and invitations that went

out to boards of education and all kinds of organizations around the country. So that I doubt that there are many other programs in the history of the country that compare with, or certainly very few if any that exceed, the record of OEO in that for the total number of dollars spent, the relatively few number of new federal civil servants that were hired to spend that much money. Did I say that correctly? You understand what I'm saying?

G: Sure.

B: And the fact then the programs really went to a lot of places. Therefore, even though like any and every other federal agency we had our detractors who talked about a great big new federal bureaucracy being created, the OEO bureaucracy. At its height, how many employees were there in Washington? Was it something like seven, eight hundred? Was it more than that? Maybe it was slightly more than that, but I doubt that it was more than that. All of the people fitted into that one building on 19th and M.

I've got to tell you an anecdote. Can I tell you, out of place, a little anecdote? Just drop a footnote here, because I may forget. Maybe I told you this before, I know I told it to somebody. Bill Kelly came and said there was a building almost finished that might be available for us on 19th and M, if we wanted that to be our headquarters after OEO is authorized. Of course until then, as you know, we had all these temporary buildings as a task force. This was going to be the OEO building now, and a certain number of very practical questions had to be answered. Bill Kelly came and said, "Hey, should we have carpeting or tile floor?" Obviously one of the questions was what do each of these things cost? Well, it turned out with modern construction, carpeting cost a little bit less than tile floor. But Sargent Shriver and some of us quickly came to the conclusion that even though it's going to cost the government a little bit more, what we

don't need are descriptions in the papers of the carpet-covered poverty program building. So we chose the somewhat more expensive tile in order to avoid the impression of a luxurious building. We also decided against curtains in the windows, we'd just do with blinds.

But I think I was saying, I remember that Bill Kelly and others would give us the figures to back this up, that per million dollars spent by OEO, we probably had fewer federal employees than any other program. It occurs to me now, you probably will have to exclude Social Security, because Social Security was just a check-writing operation.

G: In retrospect, do you think that OEO should have restricted itself more to the coordinating function of coordinating other agencies than to the operating function which it got into?

B: No, since you asked the question in a general, categoric way. I mean generally I don't think that question merits a yes. I'm sure that we perhaps could have and maybe should have spun off some programs sooner.

G: That was hard to do, wasn't it?

B: But we had to be sure. Maybe this still sounds a little bit like flag-waving and ultra social action-oriented talk, but I guess I can be a little guilty of that even now. The fact is that those who put the program together, maybe incorrectly and unfairly, but those who put the program together had a very, very low opinion of the commitment to this War on Poverty that would be reflected in the managements of the ongoing departments. After all, in the ongoing departments, including even Interior and Agriculture to run the rural Job Corps, for example, or the old employees of the Employment Service, would they really know how to go out and recruit poor people? Would they care enough? Now I

know that we were accused even then, and maybe now I would have a softer attitude, that that was perhaps too cruel a judgment. Maybe it was too cruel a judgment, but I cite it here now only to report to you that it was our judgment. And with that kind of a judgment we then went for the alternative, which is, well, we have some of these new programs that are now authorized specifically by the act, or which are designed under the general rubric of Community Action, let's test them, let's work them out, and when it's feasible and doable, then they can be spun off.

G: Do you think there was a reluctance to spin off programs after they had matured and were ready to be spun off? I mean, as you look back on it, can you recall, say, in the case of Head Start or something else where OEO wanted to hold onto something for a longer time?

B: No, I tell you, the only thing I can recall--and I'm sorry that unless I got into the records and looked at things I can only record with you an impression--I know that several times I was on the side that argued, and sometimes unsuccessfully, that we should spin off programs. I was personally more inclined to spin off and challenge ongoing agencies. But I must also say--as I say it to you it's now coming back to me--that I was also politically motivated, I like to think, in the finest sense of the word. It was, I think, concessions I felt we had better make to those that were saying we were building a bureaucracy. But these are judgment calls that our people had to make.

G: Was there also a political consideration in resisting a spinoff? For example, if you spun off Head Start and other national emphasis programs from Community Action, then Community Action would be more vulnerable, because you had removed a lot of the popular elements of it?

B: Yes, I guess there was some of that.

G: I mean, was this argument used in retaining Head Start?

B: What was that phrase we used for "special purpose" programs? Was that the phrase we used? You mean like if Head Start gets spun off, you're depriving the local Community Action Programs of an important piece of sponsorship? Is that what you're [asking]?

G: No, you're risking the loss of Community Action because it no longer has the popular elements like Head Start.

B: Yes. But of course one could have and one did ultimately spin off Head Start, and yet Community Action Programs could be the sponsors of those Head Start programs. They didn't necessarily. I guess what you're getting at and probably correctly so is that at least you reduced the likelihood that these programs would be considered an integral part of Community Action. So yes, there was some of that. There was some of that.

G: How well did the system of OEO regional and state directors work?

B: That came in in the latter part of my own tenure there. My offhand impression is that it didn't work well at all, that's my overall impression, that they didn't really serve much of a purpose; it became another layer of approvals, *et cetera*. I'm just not able really to comment.

G: Were some regionals generally more productive than others?

B: Oh, even without knowing the details, we can say yes to that, but I think it's also based on actual experience. And there were political appointments [which] in some cases turned out to be disappointing. As I'm talking about it now I remember, because inevitably regional appointments were in large part politicized, the approval of the senators, *et cetera*. So you had the beginning of a patronage operation there. Patronage doesn't

necessarily mean you get bad people, but it doesn't guarantee that you get good people.

G: Well, if you were going to have to single out the region that you regarded as the most successful in terms of OEO programs, which one would you pinpoint?

B: Well, before you do that, I'm trying to just put my thoughts together. In OEO, because of our need to coordinate various departments who have poverty-related kinds of activities, I think we played a significant role in the general government-wide decision about regional councils. I think it happened during OEO's first years. The idea of federal regional councils is a relatively new thing. I don't know whether it's cause or effect there, I really am just a little rusty in my recall, but I know that we surely in our efforts had as clear an argument as could be made about the need for departments of the government to work together where they have common objectives and where their programs impinge upon one another, like all the education that comes from a half dozen departments, or all health that comes from different agencies. We surely found the need for it, and that became manifested early in our operations in what was called then, I don't know what it was called later on, the Economic Opportunity Council, which was a cabinet-level department that the Vice President sort of nominally chaired. I helped him because I was--I don't know if I've ever told you this, but during most of my tenure at OEO I also was special assistant to Vice President Humphrey. Have I told you this before?

G: Yes. I don't know whether we have it on tape, but you mentioned it.

B: Yes. But I did, because I had known him and he wanted advice and guidance. So that when he came into office early in 1965 I was sort of an unofficial member of his staff. I remained on the OEO payroll, but I was also considered as part of the Vice President's staff. I staffed him for his meetings with the Economic Opportunity Council. And of

course that was the purpose of the Economic Opportunity Council, for the department heads to look at their problems. That was basically a disappointment though.

G: Why was that?

B: It was a disappointment because--well, I'm relating the word disappointment to what I just said before about the established departments. Very few cabinet members ever attended meetings of the Economic Opportunity Council. I never fully analyzed or studied or found out why, but obviously if the overall record was poor attendance on the part of cabinet members, and the records would document that--it wasn't a single meeting we're talking about--obviously the average cabinet member gave that a relatively low priority. Cabinet members always have to choose which of the meetings they're going to go to. There are always conflicts. Relatively few cabinet members ever attended.

But nevertheless, it was not unsuccessful in terms of being the vehicle, providing the opportunities for some inter-cabinet discussions. I don't remember the details, but we had a lot to do with the development and the furthering, if not the origination, of the food stamp program. There had been rather minor food stamp experiments. I know that at one critical meeting of the council there was a report and it got highlighted there, it got identified as a major, major thing that the government generally ought to be supportive of.

G: Can you recall in particular in that meeting what was happening?

B: No, but I assume the minutes are available. There were minutes but I just have this general recall.

G: Well, did the established agencies and departments resent OEO?

B: It was so reported very much in the press and elsewhere. We know of the Willard Wirtz

and the Employment [Service] differences. I think Wilbur Cohen at some point was having some differences over some programs. The whole issue of when and in what way Head Start would go to HEW was a continuing problem. I guess I don't have enough government experience. Maybe people like Sar Levitan and others can tell you more about this, but I don't know how to compare this with other similar kinds of resentments that ongoing departments have. Surely it's not the first time that new things are created which challenge an existing mandate. We had some of that.

And yes, now that I'm older, more reflective, I have to acknowledge a rather arrogant attitude that characterized at least some of the top personnel and even more importantly the middle personnel of OEO, that *we* had the ultimate truth. We were the only ones really concerned about poor people, and "we're not going to let you conduct your business the way you have all these years, with discrimination, and with lack of concern, and coming in at ten and leaving at three every day. We're the true friends of the poor." Sometimes people actually spoke literally in that way. But that criticism was really not so much voiced at the cabinet members but at what was perceived to be the stodgy, uncaring, lazy bureaucracy that had gotten old and tired and had lost its original New Deal inspiration, if any of them ever had had it, that kind of thing.

There was a lot of arrogance, and arrogance that I--I guess I have told you this about my own horror at some of the early drafts I saw of the Community Action guides. It goes to that. It wasn't enough for some of our Community Action people to talk about the need for new systems and new vehicles and bringing in the poor for the first time, but when in addition to the positive constructive things that could be said about maximum feasible participation and so on, there were these almost open challenges to the local city

hall bureaucracies and corrupt regimes, that attitude that "you're our enemy." We know that at city hall it was resented, in governors' mansions it was resented, and in cabinet departments it was resented when that kind of attitude was manifested. And we *were* guilty of some of that, there's no doubt about it. We thought we had a mandate now to clean up this society and make everybody, for the first time, moral and caring and compassionate. People don't like to be treated that way. End of sermon.

G: Did that attitude change at all in the course of the program while you were there?

B: I think it did, it did to some extent. I began to see some of it. But if truth be told, there came a time when OEO employees also started to show up at ten in the morning and leave at three in the afternoon. You remember the story I told you about James Patton, at the beginning. Every ten years somebody should come along and say to the people, kick them in the ass, and say, "We need a new beginning."

So I suppose some of it did change. I wasn't there any longer, but the OEO did learn to live with the [Edith] Green amendment, did learn to live with the mayors. Even in the last months of my tenure there, I was very happy to see that the mayors and governors who had been our prime opponents in the public arena had started to turn around to become our principal political supporters. By the way, I give Hubert Humphrey major credit for that. That was his supreme achievement. Shriver realized it, too, but Shriver had to balance off the "revolutionaries" that were still in love with him and with whom he was in love and not let them think that he was caving in. But also because he was a smooth and effective and gracious operator, he acquired also the friendship of many mayors and governors. But he had his conflicts, as you know, with [Richard] Daley and with other mayors.

But it was turned around. It *was* turned around. And then there came times in the last years of the sixties when on Capitol Hill the testimony of the mayors and the governors was absolutely indispensable to continuation of the programs. So, yes, we learned. We learned to be more tolerant.

G: Was there a problem in not being able to fire OEO employees who were involved in, say, riots or mismanagement? The fact that you had all of these contractual arrangements so that people were paid by but not necessarily employed by OEO?

B: I guess the answer is that, yes, there was some difficulty because they weren't direct employees. But again, I don't remember the details. I remember overall policies and impressions. There were things written into contracts about the rights of the OEO to participate in or expect things. In other words, we tried to establish codes of behavior especially about participating in local political action. In effect I think we were extending the Hatch concept to people who were not in direct employ of the government. I think these were concessions we made to those who had protested. But every now and then there were cases. Those are the kinds of cases that came to our morning sessions with Shriver about the insistence that a VISTA employee be fired, a VISTA employee got too involved, a Community Action employee got too involved. I don't think it was a pervasive problem. It was a serious problem.

G: Let me ask you a little bit more about personnel now. Why didn't Shriver hire an assistant director after the legislation was passed? You know, after the [Adam] Yarmolinsky incident that position remained vacant for a good while.

B: I don't know. I just don't recall it.

G: Did that create a vacuum with Shriver himself having to spend time at the Peace Corps as

well as the OEO?

B: Well, the Peace Corps situation was on its own a serious problem. His retaining both those jobs when the poverty program needed all this attention was much discussed in many, many places. Evidently the President did not seek or desire to have him drop either one of them, but he did leave the Peace Corps after a while, as you know.

But the vacancy, I don't know, in a way it can also be argued--and I remember now arguing it at the point, not arguing it but discussing it with people--in a way you couldn't quarrel with success. We were a successful program in that first year or two, measured by being able to in fact develop the ideas that were written into the legislation, being able to spend all our money for the stated purposes--and that's no mean achievement--getting the contractors and grantees and the government departments geared up to doing it, getting massive Community Action Programs analyzed and approved or rejected. Each of the major segments got going, Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps and so on. As I say, you really can't quarrel with success. Now, one would say, well, success of what. If you don't like the programs, then you don't care about having it be successful. But I think those first couple or three years, the years in which Shriver was having two jobs, had to be considered eminently satisfactory years. At least that's my judgment, I hope not a partisan, narrow, selfish judgment. And he had some very good people, he did have good people in charge of the programs.

G: I have a list of names, and I want to ask you to what extent any of these people were considered for the position of deputy director: Eugene Rostow. Do you have any recollection of his being considered?

B: Very slightly. I know Eugene Rostow in another area, I don't know whether I'm recalling

him from other references. I really don't have a recall of him.

G: Whitney Young?

B: Yes.

G: Was he considered to be [deputy director]?

B: I think Shriver once in fact wanted him, I mean really wanted him. What I don't remember is whether Whitney said no or whether the administration said no. I think this administration would have been delighted to have him. I'm just thinking back now. I see no reason why the administration would not have wanted him.

G: Sol Linowitz?

B: Yes. Of course, he was then the head of the Urban Coalition. But I don't remember any active pursuit.

G: You don't remember him being considered for this?

B: I don't remember. No, I don't remember. It's logical. You mention-- it's logical he would have been on people's lists.

G: Pat Moynihan?

B: Of course, he was so much involved in the original task force. He was assistant secretary of labor during that period. Again, as you mentioned, I'd say it's inevitable that his name would have come up.

G: Of course, those who were actually selected, Jack Conway. Why was Conway chosen deputy director, do you know?

B: Well, after all, he had a record that logically led to this. I mean, wasn't he at the time the deputy HUD secretary? Or did that follow the OEO job? No, that was before the OEO job. He was deputy secretary of HUD. Or did he get that job later? He was number-two

man in HUD.

G: I think it must have come later.

B: Later? Really? Of course, he was a strong Kennedy man, he was a strong Kennedy man. But on the other hand, in a way would that have been considered a comedown to go from a number-two cabinet post to a number-two OEO post? I just wonder. Maybe he just came directly from the labor movement. His labor job was as the number-two man to Walter Reuther. Walter Reuther was a very strong proponent of the program and of all legislation of this kind. Shriver liked him very much, and he's a very impressive man, Jack Conway is. So, no, I'm not surprised that there was indeed that much interest in him.

G: Did Conway have administrative skills that Shriver sought?

B: Oh, yes. In the labor movement he was considered a great administrator as well as being very interested in the substance of this social crusade, and all of that. And he was, he was clearly a better administrator than Shriver. He paid more attention to that, was more demanding. But of course now, first he was CAP director. He went to the deputy job from the CAP thing. He went first into CAP and there I would think people like Dick Boone and others must have known him very well and promoted him for that kind of position. Maybe Bobby Kennedy was involved, because Jack was close to the Kennedys. That's an interesting question. Are you going to try to see him? Have you seen Jack Conway?

G: I have seen him.

B: You have seen him, yes.

G: I thought maybe you might have some insight on why he was chosen.

B: I don't know. I knew him somewhat from the labor movement, because I had come from the labor movement earlier. My feeling is that there was generally, initially surely, a lot of satisfaction in having a brainy, intelligent, good political operator and so on. But he was a taskmaster, and I think he ended up probably having somewhat fewer friends than when he started. I don't say this in criticism of him, but by the nature of his job.

G: Bernie Boutin? How was he selected?

B: I haven't any idea. He was totally unknown to me when he came in, totally unknown. He was a bureaucrat.

G: Did Shriver select him or do you think the White House did?

B: I don't know. I have no knowledge. If I knew at the time I forgot it totally, so I can't help you on that at all.

G: [Bertrand] Harding?

B: Same thing, same thing. I just don't know. I don't know whether he was probably a Bureau of the Budget nominee rather than a--because he doesn't come from the movement. His background was not, as you know, at all from these areas. So these appointments could and probably do reflect the kind of a governmental hemming in of the "wild" men.

G: It seems like the individualists were more dominant in the earlier years of the program and then the administrators took over later on.

B: Oh, yes. That went right through the Republican as well as Democratic administrations, as you know, from the kind of appointments that were made. Surely with Howard Phillips they stopped the. . . .

G: Now we talked earlier about the Economic Opportunity Council. I was wondering if you

had any insight as to why Lyndon Johnson never appointed a staff for that council.

B: You mean a separate staff?

G: Yes.

B: Well, I'm just thinking aloud now, would it have been for him to appoint it? It would have been OEO people, I mean OEO people that were looking at it and staffing it in a sense, the sense that it was staffed at all. You mean independent staff that came from the Budget--?

G: Well, it was in essence an interagency one.

B: Yes, it was, but authorized by the Economic Opportunity Act and directed by Shriver. I think it was a hybrid animal. There probably is no precedent, at least at that time there was no precedent for that kind of thing. There may have been others since. Are there others that were equivalent to this in government?

G: Offhand. . . .

B: I remember that was the place where a man like Joe Kershaw came and presented his elaborate five-year plans and how it would impact on other governmental agencies and what their responsibilities would be. It was useful in terms of an internal education operation. Not many decisions were made, but some things like food stamps were encouraged as a result of that.

G: Was LBJ personally less active and involved with OEO after, say, 1966?

B: Oh, yes, of course. Almost the cliche of the time was that LBJ cares more about the war in Vietnam than the war against poverty. Now, I always thought that was an unfair comment to make about the President. I never doubted for a moment that his heart continued to be there, but his mind, his brain, his time was elsewhere. Right or wrong it

was elsewhere. So he was less involved. He didn't want to have the problems created in the poverty program when he had so many that he thought were more serious critical issues. To have to worry about the mayors' complaints, it started to be a political liability for him.

So he showed that irritation, and his reported--I say reported because I don't have intimate personal knowledge of this--but his slighting of Shriver, Shriver's almost total inability to get to see the President when he wanted to see him, at least it was so reported in the later period. Word like that gets around. But that the President didn't continue to care, I just refuse to believe that that's an accurate or fair way to put it. There remained his care about poverty and doing something about it. But by 1966, 1967, the war in Vietnam was an all-consuming headache, heartache and also there was competition for federal funds. Not that anybody ever made an explicit judgment that we'll give that next billion dollars to Vietnam rather than the War on Poverty, but there it was, in effect.

G: Was LBJ concerned about waste in the program, do you think? Did he ever express his--?

B: I'm sure he was, but I don't have any special recall of an extra- ordinary effort on his part. You mean waste meaning that programs weren't effective, that kind of waste?

G: Yes, or misappropriation, misusing funds.

B: I don't believe there were ever any serious, credible cases of misuse of funds. Now misjudgments in how to spend money for poverty, that obviously continues to be a subject fit for discussion. I mean, we still don't have total agreement as to whether Head Start helps kids or not. I mean even now the experts argue. So waste in that sense, whether certain social programs turned out to be a social waste, is obviously different

from whether programs were so loosely administered, carelessly administered, that people were cheating on the program. And there of course the Office of Inspection was involved, and there were congressional inquiries.

G: One of the criticisms of OEO has been that its evaluation tools during the early years especially were not adequate to really give any quantitative judgments on what was working and what wasn't working.

B: Well, I think that's true of the last twenty years. I think we have not yet developed in this country acceptable tools of analysis for measurements of progress. I mean, how does one measure what is progress? I'll give you a very, very subjective evaluation--maybe this is a note on which maybe we can even close the discussions. I've been away from the program fifteen years now; I continue to be left with two or three major positive impressions about the contributions of the War on Poverty.

First, I suppose, and foremost is this rather general, vague, maybe untouchable phenomenon that we sensitized America to the problems of the poor. There continues to be a very, very valuable positive effect even today. Leaving aside all the partisanship that might be involved, the fact that one can throw a label at Reagan as not being concerned about the poor, and it receives a very positive response. When you have significant majorities of the American people telling every pollster who's asked them, "Do you think the administration's program is fair to the poor?" they say it is not fair to the poor. In other words, being fair to the poor is now considered a proper and necessary national objective. I think we had a lot to do with creating that attitude about the poor, and not that they are shiftless people for whom the government is doing too much. People do think that about welfare people, but about the poor generally, it is right to be

concerned about the poor.

Secondly, the War on Poverty--not OEO alone; OEO was the symbol of the War on Poverty--the declaration of war against poverty and the basic acceptance of that challenge by the American people made possible some very historic breakthroughs in the middle 1960s that I think might *ultimately* have been adopted anyway, but it might have taken another decade. I'm thinking of Medicare. I had been personally involved from 1955 on with groups in this country that worked very hard for medical insurance, starting with the Forand bill and the Murray-Wagner-Dingell bill in the early fifties. It was a tough struggle until it was put in the context of it being related to the war against poverty. Now, Medicare didn't help only poor people, as we know. It's a general insurance program, but that additional context that people would get instantly poor if they get sick or have to go for an operation in their retirement made it possible. ESEA provided federal aid to education for schools and districts that reached significant numbers of poor students. Rent supplements and a whole lot of special housing programs aimed at the poor got a real lift. So the "war on poverty" made possible these and other programs that affected the poor.

Then thirdly, it's not unlike the first one--well, it really is different although maybe I should have listed it second, because it flows naturally from the first. It may have been expensive to get to what I'm going to describe in a moment. Maybe it cost several billion dollars or maybe even twenty billion dollars to do it, but in the course of the poverty program we helped bring into our political system, and we helped train, thousands of men and women who had never had opportunities for public service. I don't know how many thousands but surely it's got to be measured in the thousands, maybe the

tens of thousands. We gave a lot of people an opportunity for direct participation in the system, the political system, the social system, the community system, gave them the beginning of confidence in what a political system can do on behalf of justice for people. Many of them were black, but [there were] not only blacks. But to the extent that they were black we made a tremendous contribution to real civil rights progress in this country. Not the *de jure* progress, which is terribly important, the right to vote and so on and so forth, the right to fair employment and housing rules, but to open up economic opportunities. More was done for civil rights in the Head Start program of Mississippi than through any civil rights legislation ever passed. We saw much increased *de facto* integration. Many individual blacks and poor whites became members of Community Action Programs, Head Start advisory groups, Upward Bound selection committees, WICS--Women in Community Services--JACS [Joint Action in Community Service] and so on.

So as I said in the beginning, maybe it was an expensive thing we did, maybe it took many thousands for each of the people I'm talking about, but I can't go to a conference now in this town--really I feel very strongly, I hope it doesn't sound too rhetorical and too emotional--but I can't go to a major meeting in this city, like the annual meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus, or a major meeting of the National Urban League, a convention, or some White House conference on the aging or something similar, I can't go into that meeting without myself identifying literally scores of people who got their beginnings in 1964, 1965, 1966 in the poverty program. I think that's marvelous. And I can put aside almost all the other aspects of the program, the pluses and the minuses, and say that if this is what we helped do for America, if we helped

provide a combination of confidence and talent in working within the system and bringing in people who might otherwise never have been attracted or allowed into the system, I consider that a very, very major accomplishment of the War on Poverty. End of speech.

G: To what extent do you think it was successful in redirecting the focus of existing agencies?

B: Well, I think I've covered that. I think that to the extent that they became more sensitive to the problems of the underprivileged, of the minorities, of the poor, and the many programs--I've cited some of them--that have been developed, but also an orientation, an attitude, I think it's a plus. It's a plus. In education, in manpower training, adult literacy, so many things were affected by it, health, preschool training.

(Interruption)

G: As OEO matured there seems to have been a greater emphasis on jobs. Is this correct, and if so why do you think the change in emphasis?

B: Well, I don't know how you measure that change in emphasis, but I'd say it's very logical expectable. The OEO stands for Office of Economic Opportunity, and if there's any basic philosophy that's involved--I remember the early speeches that I used to make whenever I went out to explain the program--we were saying that over and above the health of the economy, which provides the jobs in the first place, what we're going to be addressing ourselves to is to see that to the extent that jobs are available, that the people who are now poor and in the underclass are personally equipped to qualify for those jobs, so that they could take advantage of any economic opportunity that exists. So therefore programs like Community Action, job training, Job Corps, even Head Start

ultimately--the kid will not be a dropout before he is of job age--all of these things are to help people be better prepared to accept jobs. So surely in the initial years that had to be a prime function.

But then what was seen, and seen very impressively and tragically I'm afraid, is that even as a lot of people got better trained to take jobs, the jobs haven't been there. "What's the point of training and motivating, if the graduates of Job Corps then cannot go into private jobs?" many were asking. But the poverty program as originally designed and defined, the poverty program itself cannot be the creator of jobs. NYC jobs were just temporary transitional jobs for the purpose really of job training and job orientation. But it's the economy as a whole, and it's the government as a whole, that is responsible for creating job openings.

So if your question implies and goes to the issue of the poverty program people realizing unless there are jobs at the end of the road there's no point doing everything else, I think it was a natural development, that they should so define it. When you're dealing with a situation where, while general indices of employment might go up and down, you have an almost uninterrupted increase in the level of unemployment for what was surely one of our principal target groups, minority youth, and find that unemployment rates for minority youth are in the 40 and 50 percentage range, you surely have got to say that unless jobs for which people like those are prepared are created, you haven't really eliminated the outlook for poverty for these people.

G: Do you have any recollection of what led to Billy Graham's support of the War on Poverty?

B: I would have to say it's Sargent Shriver.

G: You don't recall?

B: I don't recall, but I know there was that very exciting business--I don't know, I don't know that there's anything special.

G: Do you think that the War on Poverty was spread too thinly, that it would have been better if it had focused on specific target areas and done some more intensive work?

B: Well, I think I've already told you what my first recommendation to Sargent Shriver was. If I did, it bears repeating, adult illiteracy, wiping out of illiteracy. I believed back in 1964 that since we had only roughly a half billion dollars in "new money" [our goal should be] to identify [that] perhaps the most prevalent, pervasive single problem that makes people ineligible for employment and for creating a better future for themselves is illiteracy. That as a down payment on the War on Poverty, as the first battle, even while we might try some other things, we should say we're going to have a determined national effort involving everything, the media and the education departments and the schools and the parents, an all-out effort to eliminate illiteracy from this country, like some other countries have done. Unfortunately for us, the totalitarian countries have seen that as their objective. But we didn't do that. We just incorporated a rather minor program like that into the mix.

But I think as I said once before, too, no matter how you might argue logically and conceptually for a concentration on one or two items, politically, Sargent Shriver insisted, and probably correctly, that we never would have gotten that original authorization if we didn't pay our respects to the adult literacy crowd *and* to the preschool crowd *and* to the health crowd *and* to the employment crowd. And that was done.

G: I think we [better stop here].

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III

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