INTERVIEW IV

DATE: April 25, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: NASH CASTRO

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

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

Tape 1 of 2

F: Nash, the previous time we met we got up to the point where you had agreed on a site for Resurrection City. Now then, one thing we have not touched on thus far is Congressional interest and reaction to these negotiations--how much of a hand various people took, how much concern they showed. I wonder if you could elaborate on that a bit.

C: I'd be glad to. From the very beginning, the members of the Congress showed great interest, more specifically even greater concern about an encampment such as this.

F: Did this spread across both parties?

C: Very much so. And I received quite a number of telegrams, and the Secretary did, and others did, from members of Congress urging us not to issue a permit for this kind of demonstration. Of course, we had a lot of letters from people through the country asking us not to do this. Finally, the indicators from the Congress all coalesced, and the result was that we had a number of hearings on the Hill, and--in fact, so many I can't even remember. I would have to check the record. These were closed hearings for the most part. No transcript was ever published to my knowledge.

F: With whom?

C: Well, we had, I think, two hearings before the House Committee on Public Works. The interesting thing about that is that normally these committees don't attract the full membership. They attract maybe a handful of members, but in the case of the two or three hearings--as I say, I lost track--we had practically every member of that committee sitting in. They were long hearings, too. I know that on the occasion of the second hearing, I was on the stand for over half a day. We were there for about eight hours all told. I remember how exhausted I was because they really, really were very incisive--asking very penetrating, very difficult questions.

F: Did they probe rather than try to develop some line of thought?

C: Well, essentially that, but what they were seeking was information. The difficulty for me, and the difficulty for the other witnesses, was that we didn't have all the information they asked for. I'm reminded of a hearing before Congressman [William] Natcher's subcommittee on the District of Columbia. He convened us one day, including the mayor, the deputy mayor, the chief of police, and Fred Vinson, and--oh, quite a number of people, I among them. And the committee was there in full force as I recall. The form of questioning on the part of the committee did not elicit anything but very vague answers, and I sensed a great frustration on the part of this particular committee. I've testified on the Hill many, many times on quite a number of subjects relating to parks, and this is the only time I can remember that I felt that they were terribly frustrated over the way the hearing went.

F: They did not know what to ask? Or there weren't any answers?

C: Substantially that, and also at that point, there just weren't any answers. I tried to make the point that a lot of this was still hypothetical, and sensing this tremendous frustration on the part of the committee, I interrupted one of the members of the committee who was questioning another witness at the time, and I asked Congressman Natcher if, instead of proceeding as they had been going, it mightn't be better for me just to indicate to them what I knew up to that point. And I told the whole story as of this particular day, and this seemed to create a better climate at this particular hearing.

Mr. Natcher, who is a very wonderful, straightforward member of the Congress and with whom I've done business many times, especially on appropriations, was very critical of all of the witnesses at this hearing except the mayor. In fact, he complimented Walter Washington's testimony, but he said that he felt the rest of us were withholding information, which wasn't at all true. I'm not inclined that way, for one thing, and for another, I concluded that it was a form of questioning that was not producing the information sought. Sensing that, I decided the time had come for me not to rely on their questions, but to go ahead and make a statement outlining exactly what I knew up to that point. I think that turned the tide. And I made it a point, after the hearing, to call up Mr. Natcher and apologize to him for any frustrations I may have caused him. I think he felt much better after that. I certainly did.

F: Were your witnesses, as a rule, as frank and open as they could be? Was there a certain reluctance to divulge information for fear it would leak?

C: The witnesses were cautious because things were so sensitive at that point that we didn't want to reveal any more than we absolutely had to. We were afraid that anything we said might be interpreted in a way that would cause the other side to change their strategy, not

that they had a very good strategy planned, as a matter of fact, but I don't think any of us deliberately set out to withhold information. I'm not aware of anyone who deliberately would do that. Our problem was that we didn't know the answers at that point, purely and simply.

F: Now, what point is this? Do these various committee hearings go on from the time you begin to get an idea that there is going to be a Resurrection City down to the opening, or--?

C: I'm trying to recall when the first hearings took place. I would say probably in April [1968]. The first one that I recall so well--

F: Before you'd even granted a permit, or selected a site?

C: Oh, heavens yes! That's the whole issue, you see. They wanted to know what we knew. And, of course, I made it a point to tell them as much as I knew. The big question was, are you going to issue a permit?

F: It wasn't your decision really, was it?

C: Joe, I could never answer that question because I didn't know, and I tried to communicate this to them--to tell them that I didn't know. And this infuriated some of those members of the Congress. I recall that Congressman [William] Cramer of Florida was a real tiger about this. He kept pressing me and pressing me for a yes or no answer, and I couldn't give him one. Nobody could have given him one because none of us knew whether we were going to issue a permit. My own judgment was that there was no question about the fact that we were going to issue one, because I think the lines were pretty clearly drawn by [Walter] Fauntroy and his lieutenants, who made it very plain to me that they were

coming with or without a permit. But facing the direct question, "Are you going to issue a permit?" we couldn't say yes or no at that point. I didn't know. Nobody knew.

F: Did Interior and Insular Affairs Committee also call you up?

C: They sure did, and Stewart Udall and George Hartzog and I were up there to testify one day on a bill that had been introduced to deny this proposed use of park lands in future. This took place during the time that the encampment was in progress.

The first hearing, as I recall, was conducted by Ken Gray, a Democrat from Illinois who is chairman of the House Public Works Subcommittee on Public Grounds in the District of Columbia. I've forgotten the title of his committee. But Ken, wisely or unwisely, took a pretty active part in this whole thing up to the point of the issuance of the permit. He did not have anything to do with the negotiation of the permit, but he did inject himself pretty forcefully into the whole exercise through his committee. He held two hearings with us, which I thought were about as tough hearings in which I've ever testified. He had the chief counsel of the House Public Works Committee, a real nice guy named Dick Sullivan, work with us, not in the sense of helping us frame the permit, but in the sense of a channel of communication between the committee and us and the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference]. On the day that we negotiated the permit, Dick Sullivan called me several times out of the meeting to be kept abreast of everything. Gray took a tremendous interest in this thing, and it almost killed him politically. As a matter of fact, Dick Sullivan told me some months after the last election that Gray had literally started packing up to return home to Illinois because he did not think he would be re-elected. And it came as a great surprise to him that he was re-elected. You see, he injected himself into this thing--

F: Which side was he on?

C: Well, he was on the side of propriety and righteousness, I guess. He wanted to do what was correct, but he created the image that he was the champion of the SCLC, or the people who were coming. And because he got his name into the press, on television, and everywhere else, it created some very grave problems for him from the standpoint of re-election. And, as I say, Sullivan told me that the guy had started packing up because he did not expect to be returned to the Congress.

F: Other than just individual protestations or urgings from Congressmen, did you get any sort of official or semi-official directives from them? Did the committee suggest what you ought to do, or did they mainly just listen and absorb, give you individual opinions?

C: Individually, they wrote to me. They wrote to the Secretary; and they urged that we not issue the permit. As a committee, they couldn't impose their will on the Executive--that's out of the question.

F: Was there any attempt to rush through emergency legislation?

C: Absolutely. This was what precipitated the hearings before the House Public Works Committee on both counts. Jack Marsh of Virginia introduced a bill, and he had a number of members of the Congress join him in the introduction of it in the form of a resolution.

F: He's down from the Lexington area, isn't he?

C: Yes, he happens to be a very good friend of mine. And he showed a grave concern about this thing, I might say--constructive concern. But on April 30, which was only about ten days before we issued the permit, he introduced a resolution, and he sent me a copy of it, with a letter, saying that the resolution had been introduced on that day by every member

of the House delegation from Virginia, as well as by a member of the Congress from Louisiana, Mr. [Joe] Waggonner. So, there was great feeling about this on the Hill, but--the Congress didn't want to see this exercise fly. Now, that's not correct either. Not every Congressman felt this way. There were some people up there who felt quite the other way.

F: Did you get a balance on this, or was it weighted against--?

C: No, it was weighted against, just no doubt about it. The people who were in favor of it were in the minority.

F: On grounds that it could lead to trouble? Was this encouraged by the riots, I mean this attitude or--?

C: Precisely that. The aftermath of the riots, they felt, could be very destructive in the sense that people were rather incensed over the assassination of Dr. King, and I could understand this.

But, you know, in the beginning there were quite a few members of the Congress who were sympathetic. It's after they saw the form that the demonstration took that they hardened against it, too. There were some who had been favorable to the idea of permitting the demonstration that rather changed their minds after it had been in progress for several weeks. Not only did we testify at hearings formally, but we were also called up for some informal meetings where we merely sat in a room and chatted on the status of things at that particular time.

One of the most exhaustive hearings for me occurred one night with Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, who was then chairman of the District Committee. He invited only a few of us as witnesses, including Tom Fletcher, the deputy mayor, and

General Southworth of the D.C. National Guard, and myse1f--just the three of us. The hearing started about seven o'clock. It lasted about two hours, and Senator [Jacob] Javits took part. At that time, Javits was a very strong proponent of this whole thing. And I've never been subjected to such penetrating, incisive questioning in my life. It was exhausting, wearying. I left that hearing feeling like a dishrag.

F: How long did it go on?

C: It lasted about two hours, but it was very wearying.

F: Did you get the feeling that they were motivated by concern more than political stance?

C: A little of each. Senator Byrd, whom I've always admired because I think he is totally dedicated to what he's doing, had no political reason for doing this. He felt his responsibility as the chairman of the D.C. committee and he exercised it, and he kept in very close touch with us personally and through his administrative assistant, because he was very intensely interested.

The hearing before the Aspinall committee on the House side, meaning the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, addressed itself to a piece of legislation which had been introduced to prevent this kind of use of park lands. I don't know how well you know Wayne Aspinall--

F: Fairly well.

C: But, you know, he can be very, very tough. It was on one of those days where he was being very tough and he really--

F: Yes, I've seen him at his inflexible best.

C: That's right. And, you know, the big issue was the constitutionality of denying people this right. And he made it tough for Stewart Udall and George Hartzog, the director of

the Park Service, and me, because he asked questions that couldn't be answered with a yes or a no--it wasn't as simple as that. And if we started to qualify them, he'd interrupt us and say, "Answer yes or no." And I found it to be--

F: Some questions don't answer that way.

C: That's right. When one does not know an answer, one can't say yes or no. But nothing came of that proposed legislation; nothing came of any of the many bills that were introduced to thwart or prevent this kind of thing in the future.

As a matter of fact, in this current Congress there have been more than a handful of legislative proposals to prevent demonstrations such as this in the future.

F: But as of this moment, you are legislatively no farther down the road than you were, say, in March of 1968?

C: Not one bit. Some people don't understand that, by virtue of our own regulations, there isn't a heck of a lot we can do except recognize this form of use, unless we determine that the public health and the public safety are jeopardized. In the event we received an application again for something like this, I would deny it on those grounds. I would probably get sued and taken to court. But I think I could sustain it, because I think this exercise in 1968 proved that it is not in the interest of public health and safety to permit this kind of a demonstration.

F: I presume these questions were both raised previous to the issuance of the permit?

C: They were indeed, and we did our best--

F: Again, you didn't know the answer?

C: No, the only thing we could go on was the indication we had from the SCLC leadership to the effect that they would maintain a force of marshals who would keep order and

discipline; that they would provide for the health of people in the camp. It's not in that context that I'm talking about now. It's in the context of the broader public health and safety of the people of the community.

F: Did you have a sort of permit form, a regular routine--whether you could use it in this case or not--that you had relied on in the past?

C: We have a standard permit form that is issued in conformance with our own regulations, and the regulations provide that the applicant will furnish certain details like the dates of the event, the times of the event, the numbers of people participating in the event, the nature of it--that kind of thing. But this was a totally different exercise, and although we took the basic permit and adapted it, because of the many special considerations involved in this particular exercise, we had to do all kinds of pirouettes to develop the correct and the proper language.

F: Did your congressional hearings go on right up through the conclusion of Resurrection City?

C: Just about. The hearings began before the event started, and they continued throughout. These were more in the nature of updating the committees on what was going on, what form the demonstration was taking. The press covered it very widely--

F: I wanted to ask you about the press on this. And their interest, I presume, started from the first announcement--the first intimation of an announcement that there would be a Resurrection City?

C: Absolutely. I never had more invitations to appear on television in my life, but I didn't accept one single one. Very frankly, the reason I didn't accept any of them is that I was not in a position to speak authoritatively about anything up until we issued the permit.

When we had our meetings with the SCLC officials around this table and with our lawyers and with Justice people and everybody else, the reporters stood right outside my door there and waited for us to come out. I avoided talking to them as much as I could because I didn't want anything untoward to happen as a result of interviews. I tried to be very discreet and simply say that no conclusive arrangements had been formulated up to that point; that we had exchanged information, and basically, that was true.

F: Were the SCLC people as discreet as you?

C: The SCLC people, unfortunately, did not speak with one voice. That was one of their big problems. They infuriated the public through the press by coming out with very rash statements, saying that they were going to put their encampment on the mall between 11th and 14th Streets. One representative would come out and make a statement like that; another guy would come out and say that, "We're going to plunk our camp down on the Washington Monument grounds." Another one would come out with another location. They infuriated the public, and it made it very untenable for me because the press would call and ask me to confirm it, and, of course, I couldn't confirm it. This made things very difficult and trying.

F: They didn't feed information then through something like a press office for themselves that would coordinate statements and keep them straight?

C: If they only had the wisdom to do that, many of their problems would never have occurred. But, you see, each one went about things unilaterally: Fauntroy did; [Bernard] Lafayette did; [Anthony] Henry did; [Ralph] Abernathy did; Jesse Jackson did; [Reies Lopez] Tijerina did; all of them. They had no--

F: Eleven quarterbacks?

C: That's it, and that was one of their great, great problems. No one really knew what the other one was doing.

F: Well, now, you had several elements here. Among them, of course, just a straight, kind of old folks and poor people, and of course, the continuing Negro, or black American-- and then you introduced the Mexican-American--

C: And the Indian.

F: And the Indian. Did these groups work harmoniously? Or again, did you tend to have several groups running side-by-side and not always at the same speed?

C: They never really got together.

F: Was there friction between the groups?

C: Yes, very much so, and this was very critical for us, because, you see, under the terms of the permit, we assigned them a fixed area south of the Reflecting Pool. They worked out the location of the shacks in such a way that they themselves practiced segregation. They had the Negroes substantially in one area; they had the Indians substantially in one area; and they had the Mexican-Americans substantially in one area. The Mexican-Americans never moved into their part of the camp. They never occupied their specified shelters. They put up a few up on the east end of the encampment, going beyond the limits of their assigned perimeters. This is one of the points of contention that I had with [Frank] Reeves and [Leroy] Clarke, their attorneys, because they violated the permit. I kept saying to them, "These are the things that will not necessarily inspire us to extend your permit. If you can't conform with the conditions of the permit, we're not going to be very amenable to any kind of an extension."

Their lawyers finally told me that they were literally afraid to move the Mexicans within the bounds of the camp for the reason that they feared there would be a clash between the Negroes and the Mexicans. They were literally afraid to ask them to move.

I made up my mind that, since I'm of Mexican-American descent myself, philosophically, these people just could never get together. You know, there's a difference in religion; there's a difference in philosophy. I made this observation in my own mind, and I communicated it to Bob Owens one time in the Justice Department who, by the way, was tremendously helpful to me. This guy was my shadow throughout. He stayed with me, and we talked on the phone scores of times a day. Bob is from the Southwest--from Texas--and a great, great guy.

When this issue came up with the lawyers, I said, "You know, Bob, philosophically, I don't think these people can ever get together." And he said, "You're absolutely right." But it was very tenuous [and] worrisome to me, because as it resolved itself, the Mexican-American group and the Indians never did move into the camp in any appreciable numbers. They may have had a symbolic handful there, but no more than that. What they did was to occupy a private school in Southwest Washington called the Hawthorne School. They operated out of there, and Tijerina would appear--

F: It had been one of your beautification schools, hadn't it?

C: Yes. No. Let me see--Hawthorne? No, I don't think so. No, that's a private school, and we didn't beautify that one.

But Tijerina would appear at the camp every once in a while, I suppose to show some unity between him and Abernathy, but practically speaking, they never got together.

F: But you couldn't focus on one man as a spokesman for the group; you could not, for instance, go to Abernathy and feel that you had satisfied the Indians or the Mexicans?

C: I never tried to see Abernathy. For one thing, he was not very discreet in the things that he said. In fact, he was everything except discreet. Very frankly, every time he appeared on television, which was every day, or in the press, which was every day, he came out with very, very rash statements about the fact that "we're going to stay here forever," and all that kind of nonsense. It infuriated me. I never made it a point to try and see him because I knew that he didn't have any more say about what was happening in that camp than anyone else did. There's a great illusion that Abernathy ran the show; that's a lot of nonsense. Nobody ran the show, and if anybody ran it, it was a hundred different people. That was one of our great problems.

I recall a telegram in the record, and I'm sure I have it here somewhere, from Roy Clarke--one of their attorneys and a very fine Negro, by the way--very conscientious, hard working, but very, very concerned all the time about the way things were going. In fact, he threatened to withdraw at one point, and I talked him out of it, because he was the only real connection that I had. It wasn't a real connection; it was a semi-real connection, but even that helped. Things got so bad at one point that Clarke sent a telegram to Abernathy asking for an appointment because I was riding herd on the permit. I was going to the camp every day, sometimes several times a day, observing and monitoring. I would come back here to my office depressed as the devil. I would sit down, and I'd dictate a letter to Reeves and Clarke and say, "Look, you guys are not conforming to the conditions of the permit," and Clarke even more than Reeves--Reeves tried some, but only half-heartedly. Clarke really tried to correct these conditions, but he couldn't get to

Abernathy. He'd get to the city manager and Reeves would too, but the city manager didn't have any authority, and the man in the position kept changing all the time anyway. Truthfully, I tried everybody--city managers, construction superintendents, chief marshals. They had so many people in command over there that nothing got done. It was the biggest comedy of errors that I ever--

F: Did you ever try to resolve this organizational dilemma, not so much a dilemma as a fragmentation?

C: It was worse than that; it was disaster. It was an organizational disaster, and I think--

F: Did they realize it?

C: If they did, I'm not sure that they could have done a whole lot about it. This pointed up the fact that Abernathy was never really in charge of the operation. As a matter of fact, at one point I got so disgusted with the way things were going that I said to Roy Clarke, "My God, Roy, move Abernathy into the camp and see if he can't bring things under control and into some kind of order."

His wife who was with him said, "Well, Nash"--and by the way, she's a lawyer, too, and a very attractive Negro and just as bright and conscientious as her husband--she said, "I don't think you understand. The reason Abernathy does not move into that camp is that we're afraid he'll be assassinated, too."

That's the kind of unity that they had, and that made it very difficult. I feel that if Martin Luther King had lived, things would have gone a thousand per cent better. He had qualities of leadership others did not have.

F: Abernathy just inherited the dream but it was just about that nebulous?

C: Yes, but he didn't know what to do with it. He still doesn't know. He makes a great show of unity. I don't think King will ever be replaced by any of them.

F: Incidentally, we have a date with both him and Lester Maddox in Atlanta--

C: Abernathy and Maddox?

F: Yes, in about two weeks.

C: That's interesting.

F: Nice juxtaposition.

C: As I say, I avoided talking with Abernathy. One interesting experience--I don't know whether I related this to you before, but one of the conditions of the permit was we would define the perimeters--

F: No, we haven't talked about that.

C: --with which they could work within. Roughly, we assigned twelve acres of ground to them, and they agreed as a condition of the permit that they would provide snow fences all the way around the camp to keep intruders from going in and to control the comings and goings of people. Typically, they were so disorganized that they never got around to providing the snow fence.

One day, Walter Fauntroy called--I had been needling him, I had been needling all of them to put up the bloody snow fence. And one day he called and he said, "We just can't manage the snow fence. Can you help us out with some?" So, I called up all of our superintendents--

F: Was this a financial situation?

C: Yes, primarily that.

F: A procurement situation?

C: Disorganization. If somebody had really been in charge, they could have managed it, because they garnered several hundred thousands of dollars worth of lumber and other stuff. Snow fence is not expensive; it's only twenty cents a linear foot. But they ended up with no snow fence. This was of concern to me because intruders went in and caused trouble in the camp. I kept insisting that they put up the bloody fence.

Fauntroy finally called me one day and said, "Nash, we're just not going to make it. We can't swing it, and I wonder if you can help us."

Because it was of interest to us for them to have that fence, because it made it easier for our Park Police to monitor the event, I said, "We'll furnish you the snow fence with the understanding you will replace it in kind and will reimburse us for any that may not be returned." I called up our superintendents and asked them to "send all the snow fence you've got to our central maintenance yard," which is right across the way from here. And I said, "Please don't ask me any questions. Just send it."

F: You don't often call for snow fence in April, do you?

C: That's right. No, I've never called for snow fence in April in my life, and actually I was very rushed that day and normally I would have gone ahead and explained to them, "Fellows, we need your help," and that kind of thing.

Well, we arranged for--I've forgotten how many thousands of feet of snow fence to be delivered at the central yard. So I called Fauntroy and said, "We have your snow fence, and you can have it if you'll send over for it, and if you will erect it."

He showed up here in my office in short order, and I took him and his associates across the way. They loaded the snow fence and took it to Resurrection City. I took

them back in my car and their trucks took the snow fence. And he said, "Come in the camp and meet some of the people that you're going to be working with."

Near the west entrance to the camp a large crowd had assembled around James Bevel, Reverend James Bevel. Bernard Lafayette was with him and he was holding a press conference on television. I hung around and listened to all the bombast, got tired of it, and told Walter I had to get back to the office. He said, "Well, stick around just a minute because I want you to meet Reverend Bevel."

I waited another few minutes until he finished his press conference. Bevil was dressed in overalls, bib overalls as I recall. He wore a straw hat, the typical farmer's straw hat--red bandana around his neck. Fauntroy took me to him and introduced me to him. I noticed something about Bevel: that he wasn't all there. He had been drinking or something, for he didn't appear rational to me. His eyes, for one thing, were not focused properly. I determined "this guy has been drinking," and it was mid-afternoon. I couldn't believe it because he is a man of the cloth, as you know. In any case, Fauntroy took me up and presented me to him and Bevel said, "Your name is Castro?"

I said, "Yes."

"You a soul brother?"

And I said, "I don't understand, Mr. Bevel."

He said, "You a brother?"

I sort of shook my head. I didn't know how to answer him. I had never been confronted with a question like that in my life. He went on to his next question. He asked, "You related to Fidel Castro?"

I said, "No, we just happen to have the same name."

"Oh," he said, "he's a great man." I felt sick at that point.

I never talked with Bevel again. I talked with Jesse Jackson, who I thought could have been a very effective leader. At least, the impression I had of Jackson was that he knew what he was about. And it developed that he had been appointed city manager. They kept changing their city managers because none of them had any effect, as I told you earlier.

F: By city manager, now, you're talking about Resurrection City manager?

C: Exactly that. They had several of them, and none of them succeeded.

F: Who named them? Was there a kind of junta?

C: I never knew. One day they would have one and a few days later they'd have another one.

But when they announced that Jackson was going to be city manager, I took heart because Bob Owens, of the Justice Department, who has been on the civil rights front for Justice for many years, had a high impression of Jackson. He said, "I think a lot of your troubles are going to go by the wayside if this guy takes hold." Well, Jackson never took hold, I think, because they were having so many internal problems in the camp in the way of discipline, among other things, and the terrible rains that fell all during that period.

One Sunday morning, at a point where conditions were so bad in the camp as a result of the rain and their inability to hook up the sewage system, which was a condition of the permit, that I decided to talk with Jackson. I went there, and I got hold of their building or construction superintendent, a guy named Kruze [?]--a Negro, and we both went to see Jackson. It was shortly before ten o'clock. I started talking with Jesse Jackson. He was headed for a church service at that time within the camp, and I might as

well have been talking to that wall. The guy was so visibly exhausted, so weary, that I'm not sure he knew what I was even talking about and my reaction to that was one of great sadness because I had felt that here we had one guy who could pull this thing together.

F: He'd just done himself in?

C: He didn't hear one word that I said, so we decided that we would have to go from day to day, because we exhausted every possibility of ever getting anyone to speak for the whole group.

F: We're getting ahead of the chronological story, but I don't think it matters. Did the press have a free sort of come-and-go privilege within the city, or were there certain hours--did they have to get permission to enter? In other words, any time I wanted to do a television interview, could I have just taken my machinery down there and set up?

C: For the most part, but they imposed restrictions on the accessibility of the camp to the press as they did to visitors. They had no fixed schedule. It was very erratic. But there were usually press people there. Some of them actually lived in the camp under the same conditions as the residents of Resurrection City lived. One of these fellows was Paul Ballantine [?] of the *Washington Post*, whom I understood right after Resurrection City undertook to write a book about it. But I have not seen it published. As a matter of fact, the *Post* was going to publish the book, but it never did and I have often wondered what happened. Ballantine was right in the midst of this thing.

The press complained to me because they were excluded from time to time.

F: Not by you?

C: No, by them. There were times when, on a moment's notice, they would decide to exclude visitors and the press and everyone else. They had no organization. They had a

PIO [Press Information Officer] type, I guess, but he didn't speak for the camp. Everybody spoke for the camp. And the press was critical of them and critical of us for their not being able to get in precisely when they wanted to.

F: Did you ever have any personal concern for your own safety?

C: Yes, but not until the end when things got very, very critical. I would say during the last week, I did feel some concern. My wife, for example, wanted to join me and take a look, but I would not take her, the reason being that there were instances where people were literally accosted in the camp and their purses and pocketbooks and other things snatched from them.

In the last week, when things were so very tense, I tended to avoid the camp. I was not concerned about my safety, but I had a feeling of depression in that last week because I knew that the time had come for them to go--forcefully, if necessary. There was no question in my mind that they were going. I determined that I was going to push very hard to bring things to an end because we could not continue the chaos.

Liz Carpenter, whom you know--who is a mutual friend of ours--kept after me to take her through the camp. I never did, knowing the press would make a big play about it.

F: Anybody with no real business there--I never went.

C: That's right. She was just curious.

F: But I wonder whether probably, even though as a historian I probably should have gone, whether I really could justify my appearance there.

C: Oh, I think you could have. The camp was open to visitors by them from time to time, not on any kind of a schedule. They tried to maintain a schedule, but it never worked.

I think the thing I resented the most about going into that camp is this: I administer the park lands in the District of Columbia. I issued their permit, and I had to show *their* pass to enter the camp. It rather infuriated me every time I had to show the pass to someone who stood at the gates acting like a policeman but not having judgment or the good sense to show any helpfulness, only being officious.

Their marshals were inclined to be rather dogmatic. They were dressed very flashily; I don't particularly care for flashily-dressed people--I guess I'm much too conservative. And when I realized that our Park Police were somewhat restricted from coming and going into the camp, it made me frustrated as the devil.

F: Was it poor people?

C: Of course not. I would say, in the beginning, it was poor people. I recall that when they first started arriving, my heart really felt for them because every evidence I saw indicated they were poor people. They were old people; they were young people; they were babies or middle-aged people. And I had the distinct feeling that they represented the really poor people. I feel they were terribly exploited. Progressively, as the militants started arriving, the young militants, the *bona fide* poor people started leaving, and we ended the operation substantially with a bunch of militants in the camp, and they are the ones that caused all the grief and trouble.

F: The poor people really didn't have any communion with the militants?

C: Not at all. There were nights when people left the camp because they were afraid to be there with some of the roughnecks. There were a lot of roughnecks in there, *bona fide* troublemakers and nothing else.

F: There was no screening of who came?

C: In the beginning there was, in the very beginning. They had a registration booth on the southeast end of the camp where people came in and signed up, and they told us that they were screening them, but it wasn't effective because they attracted a lot of hoodlums.

F: When you had the poor, were they primarily the city poor, rural poor, southern poor--?

C: I think for the most part they were southern rural poor. It was a real drama.

F: Where was Mayor Walter Washington in all this? The person you hit on most often is Walter Fauntroy, who runs second in command. Is Walter Washington trying to stay sort of above and detached, or is he right in the middle of it?

C: Walter couldn't have avoided certain deep involvement because, as mayor of the city, even though the exercise did not take part on city land but on federal lands, he couldn't help but get involved.

F: Was the fact that he was black a plus, a negative, or of no concern in this matter?

C: In my mind, I think it was a great plus. Being a Negro and having come from Georgia. Walter can really project himself into that particular role. He knows how to talk to and with these people.

F: He can talk plain. I mean, he can just sit down and lay it on the line the way it is.

C: And he can sound just like one of them when he wants to, believe it or not. He is very articulate. He sounds like a Negro; his voice is that of a southern Negro, basically, but when he wants to sound like a super-southern Negro, believe me, he knows how to do it. I have seen him in that role a time or two and he's very effective.

Walter did have quite a deep involvement. He testified at some of the same hearings at which I testified. His great concern, of course, was the city itself. The riots that he had to contend with were a real, real problem for him. We kept in touch all the

time by phone, by visits. One of the things that we did every day during the whole period was to meet in the District Building at eight o'clock. Sometimes Walter sat with us, not very often--

F: This is eight o'clock in the morning?

C: Eight o'clock every morning. And we convened in Tom Fletcher's office, the deputy mayor's office, and in addition to Tom and myself, we had Bob Owen of Justice, John Layton, the chief of the Metropolitan Police Department. We had the guy in charge of civil defense for the District, a fellow named George Rodriguez; we had Charlie Duncan, the corporation counsel; Julian Dugas, who is a close personal friend of the Mayor's and also associated with him on the job, who by the way was quite, quite effective.

F: In what way?

C: In the sense that he had an entrée into the ghetto that, you know, I didn't have. He was able to ferret information and sense the situation with good perception.

F: He's Negro?

C: Yes. He doesn't look like a Negro, and it took me some time to learn that he is a Negro. He certainly doesn't look like one. He's blue-eyed, for one thing, and very light-skinned. He sounds like a southerner, but not like a southern Negro. One of the big revelations to me was the day I learned that he is a Negro. I kept asking myself, "How can this guy go in there and talk with some of these people?" He did, not only in the ghetto, but in Resurrection City itself. He ferreted out information nobody else could, only because he is a Negro. He's a dynamic guy, but also a rather excitable fellow. I've had very good relationships with him.

In addition to him, we had the Under Secretary of the Army--oh, Lord, I can't remember his name at the moment [David McGiffertl, who usually sat with us every day. He also met with us in Ramsey Clark's office a good number of times before we negotiated the permit. We had a delegate from the Army, a young Negro major named Ken Cook, who is now Walter Washington's military aide--a very effective guy with a tremendous entrée into Resurrection City and an equally tremendous entrée into the ghetto. He was very helpful to Walter in connection with the April riots of 1968 and subsequently has been very helpful to him, and I'm sure always will be as long as he is on his staff. We also had with us at the meetings every morning a White House man. This never came out, to my knowledge. This is the first revelation of that--a guy named Nimetz.

F: Yes, Matt.

C: Do you know Matt?

F: Yes.

C: Matt sat with us at these meetings every morning. We had others, but principally these are the ones who regularly met every morning. Our purpose in meeting was to exchange information on events of the previous day and try to assess the situation as of that time and as to what we might expect that day and subsequent days. Very interesting information came out of these meetings. Essentially, we had a pretty good darned intelligence network, and the intelligence network fed us a lot of information that was exchanged at these meetings. They usually lasted an hour.

My way of approaching these particular meetings was to leave my house at seven, which I usually do, and use the telephone in my car to communicate with the deputy chief of the park police, Alfred Beye, who by the way was--

F: How do you spell that?

C: B-E-Y-E. He was tremendous throughout. I would call Al Beye about 7:30 on the way in, and he would brief me on the things that had happened the night before so that when I arrived at the meeting, I was totally informed of what had gone on and was able to give a verbal report every morning, as everybody else did. This was very helpful to us in terms of planning for that day and in terms of planning for the days which followed. The meetings were very business-like, but there was also a lot of humor in them.

Pat Murphy is one person I overlooked who attended these meetings regularly. He was the Director of Public Safety for the city at the time.

F: Did Washington chair them?

C: No, Tom Fletcher did. I think Walter showed up once or twice, but that was all.

F: Go ahead with Murphy.

C: Pat had a lot of undercover people in the camp. In fact, I don't know of an agency that didn't have undercover people in there.

F: You did, too?

C: Yes. The State Department did; the Metropolitan Police; the FBI; Justice. I'm sure CIA did; the Army certainly did. I recall one morning, towards the end of Resurrection City--I'd say two weeks before it ended when the numbers started diminishing, I got an estimate of the number of people in the camp from the Park Police, and my conversation was by telephone with Al Beye on the way in. He estimated there were 305 people in

camp; the Army sustained this figure, as did Pat Murphy. One of the funny things that came out of this was what Pat Murphy said, which I recall so well. "You know, it just occurred to me that if we took our undercover people out of that place right now, there'd be very, very few left."

It's true. We all had them. We had to. And this was tremendously helpful to us because we could tell exactly when their marches were going to start and where they were going to go, how many people would be in them roughly, and of course, we tailed them everywhere, you know. They went on buses on occasion from point A to point B, if they'd go to picket some place; they would either march or would go by bus, depending on the weather. Most of the time they had a bus because the weather was so wretched during all that time.

I don't know whether I told you this, but I literally prayed for forty days and forty nights [of rain] and I almost got them. Nothing helped us more than the rain.

F: I was going to ask you that, and I suppose since it has come up, we'll do it now. Was it a better operation from your standpoint for having had the rain, or would you have fared better if you had had crisp sunshine?

C: There's no question in my mind that the rains spelled the difference between the kind of exercise we had and the kind we might have had. I think we would have had infinitely more violence, had it not been for the rains, which tended to keep them reined, literally. It kept them in the camp a greater proportion of the time, and they didn't march out as much.

F: It made them more willing to go home when time was up?

C: Not only that, but it presented problems for them--existence problems, because they had to keep dry for one thing--and there were occasions in there when the water and the mud were eight and ten inches deep. Just sustaining themselves and living under those conditions preoccupied them a great deal of the time in many, many ways. These rains were a great blessing.

F: Were the shanties fairly watertight?

C: They were reasonably watertight. They used plastic cloth to cover them, and they were dry from that standpoint--

F: Just old painters' drops, that sort of thing?

C: Yes, substantially that--the clear plastic sheets. The water got so deep sometimes in that encampment that the darned shanties would float, literally float on the water. I know that they were miserable, but I guess some of them were a lot hardier than I would have been. They stuck it out.

One of the things that was so difficult was simply walking in the place--just walking from point A to point B. It was very difficult because of the mud. And this brings to mind the fact that one day, I guess their construction superintendent--a guy named Kruse--at that time, the construction superintendent, called me and said that they wanted permission to bring in several hundred tons of gravel to put on the site. Looking ahead to the restoration of the site, I decided that gravel wouldn't do, because it would have cost us a fortune to remove it. I knew they never would. I suggested instead that they get some boardwalks together thinking they would be more effective. They hadn't thought of that. So they started moving in that direction. They got some 1umber--I think they got some from GSA [General Services Administration]; from the Army; from the

Hechinger Lumber Company. They made an effort. It wasn't a very showy effort; it wasn't a very substantial effort, but they did try, and it did solve a few of their problems, but not many.

F: When they went to a government agency like GSA for materials, did they get pretty usual and pretty quick cooperation?

C: I don't think so. You see, they have the same restrictions that I have within the contest [context?] of government regulations. I cannot provide things such as that for them. It's out of the question, and I'm sure GSA--

F: That's what I was wondering; how much they bent the rules on that?

G: I think that what GSA probably did was to give them some pallets that may have been a little worn, and I think probably the army may have done the same thing. I think the Hechinger Lumber Company gave them some lumber, and they built a few of them, not very many because they didn't have many wooden sidewalks.

F: Let's go back. We agreed on a site which still didn't have a permit. You didn't want to give a permit until you had decided the sort of basic outlines of what you were going to do, I gather?

C: That's right. And we learned in late April, I don't recall precisely when, but I have a note here in my file--a summary--dated May 8 to Warren Christopher, which reads that on "May 6 at 5:00 p.m. representatives of the SCLC and others met with us in my office to discuss the matter of a site for the poor people's campaign." Now this is May 8. And those who were at the meeting at that particular time were a pretty big group. My God, our own people, their people, Justice people, D.C. government people, because at that

point we were getting pretty close to the issuance of the permit. And Ed Weinberg and I sat in on this meeting, but--

F: He's the solicitor for the Department of the Interior?

C: Solicitor for the Department at the time, yes. And we were late getting here because we had a hearing that day before one of the committees on the Hill, and I've forgotten which one--I know it was an all-day hearing--and I think we got here about six or seven o'clock, as I recall. But at that point, Fauntroy sought the use of West Potomac Park. I remember this very well. I had said to him, "You cannot have the Washington Monument grounds; you cannot have the Mall. We will give you West Potomac Park." Fauntroy bought it. He wasn't aware of the fact that, on the preceding day the local SCLC leadership had decided firmly on the West Washington Monument grounds. Fauntroy, sitting at this table, when he realized the *faux pas* that he had made in terms of West Potomac Park, started making a pitch for the West Washington Monument grounds, too.

They pointed out that one of the attractions of the grounds is the fact that they were more closely suited for connecting to sewer and water lines, which presented a problem in West Potomac Park. We didn't make a commitment at that time in respect to the West Washington Monument grounds, again reaffirming the fact that this site was out of the question. You see, we wanted to keep them away from the White House.

F: Yes.

C: We tried again to focus their interest on West Potomac Park, and left it at that. Then that same day, let me see--the meeting I'm talking about was on May 6, and then on the next day, on May 7, we met with them between 5:15 and 7:45 p.m. And that particular day the House Public Works Committee reported out HR 16981, which would foreclose the

assignment of public lands in the District for the purposes they had in mind. The whole group of SCLC people were here at this meeting with us and very distressed that the Congress was moving in this direction. Now, mind, this is three days before they wanted to start their encampment, whereas they had said to us that they were not going to apply for a permit, and they had been very steadfast in saying this, they now realized, because of the action of the House Public Works Committee, that the time had come for them to move forward in making a formal application. It was on this occasion that they said that they would now apply, they would probably apply, for a permit the next day.

F: Until that time, really, they had not asked then for a permit? You were not hung up on negotiation--you just hadn't been asked?

C: Just to show you how these guys worked, Joe, and how they were thinking, they told me that they were not going to apply for a permit because they wanted a confrontation.

F: They wanted to occupy, in other words?

C: Yes, they wanted Abernathy to confront the federal government. Fauntroy said that this would all be arranged and staged, literally staged for the television people, so they would have a confrontation, probably with me, Abernathy with me, see. They would go in and establish themselves and then ask for a permit. I told them this was totally unacceptable, that I wasn't going to be acting out anything, that they had to conform to the same regulations that everybody else does when they want to use federal lands for any kind of a demonstration. I totally discouraged this, but when they realized that the House Public Works Committee had reported out a bill that day, they started wilting. It was at this point that Fauntroy said to me, "We'll probably ask for a permit tomorrow." The discussion that day, according to my notes, focused completely on the site. It was still

being called the City of Hope. Do you know this? Not Resurrection City. They started out with the title, "City of Hope."

This is very curious. A few days before these meetings, I had made a commitment to speak in California in place of Mrs. Johnson to address the National Society of Designers in Palm Springs, and couldn't get out of it. I felt compelled to go, so I did it on a weekend.

I left on Friday morning and I spoke Friday night and came back Saturday. I didn't want to be out of touch with this, but when I was out there I learned from the local press that there's a hospital in Los Angeles called the City of Hope, and they were getting an injunction against SCLC for using that name.

And so they became aware of that, and they started talking about Resurrection City.

F: Where did they get the name, "Resurrection City?" Was this one they coined?

C: It's one they coined, yes.

But let me just read this note from my record. "There's a means of assuring that the Washington Monument ground site is made available to them. They now propose formally to apply for the use of the Mall between 11th and 14th Streets, hoping this will force us into a compromise which will result in the assignment of the Washington Monument grounds."

I go on to say in this summary, "Reverend Fauntroy feels so strongly in respect to this site that he is willing to go to 'the man,' which I take to mean the President. We asked them not to make any motions in respect to this until we had a chance to do some further consultation."

Then they went to Atlanta on May 8 to consult with Abernathy in respect to the filing of the application, as well as the implications of the bill reported out by the House committee. That really scared them, you see, and it's that one maneuver that committee did that really helped us because they forced them into the position of asking for a permit by reporting out the bill.

F: They didn't feel up to confronting Congress?

C: No, they didn't feel up to confronting the Congress. This was greatly advantageous to us, because we now had the initiative. It was the result of that legislation-to-be that enabled us to take the initiative. Up to that time, we didn't have a hole card, but that action provided one.

The indications we had at that May 7 meeting were to the effect their first contingent, numbering about a thousand people, would be arriving on Sunday, May 12, and they would accommodate them in churches and private homes until their facilities in Resurrection City were ready for them. They said the same group would start building the structures in preparation for the arrival on May 17 of an additional two thousand people.

They projected three thousand people in this encampment. The most they ever attracted, according to the records that the Park Police maintained, was about 2431.

F: Including undercover people?

C: Including undercover people, of which there were several hundred. They never actually filled the camp.

F: Did they have the facilities for 3,000?

C: Almost. They set out to build 650 structures, and they nearly achieved this. They got right close to it. The structures varied in design.

F: Did they contract these structures, or did they try to do the work themselves?

C: They did it themselves. They had a man who was sympathetic to their cause, a white architect by the name of Harry [John] Wiebenson. He was on the faculty of the University of Maryland. Wiebenson is the guy who designed the plywood shacks.

F: Were they prefab to a certain extent?

C: They were prefabricated right outside of the District, in Maryland.

F: So they could slap them together--

C: They slapped them together. They put up most of the 650 shacks, as I recall, but they never attracted the full complement of people they planned on.

F: I'm interested in one thing. You're going to bring in 2,000-3,000, or 1,000 people, even, and you're going to do it originally in the next four or five days, and it keeps receding. How do you delay an operation like this? It seems to me that your date, your deadline, would become almost irrevocable, or should if you're organized.

C: The deadlines became very rigid, especially at this point. Now remember, I'm talking about May 7, our meeting on May 7. We issued the permit on May 10. My recollection is that we met again the next morning, on May 8. It was on a Thursday. I think it was May 8, and Fauntroy came up with the idea of the site that we finally selected. I must have been blind, that I didn't see that site. They wanted a site that would give them total visibility. I wanted a site that would give them reasonable protection and hopefully less visibility, because I had the intuition that it would not be a pretty encampment, an attractive site.

On the morning of May 8 we sat here on final negotiations for the site.

F: Of course, they also wanted to be close?

C: They wanted to be as close in as they could. Ideally, what they wanted was a site that would give them the Capitol in the background for publicity and promotion and television and image purposes. We foreclosed that. We foreclosed the Washington Monument grounds, so I was pretty firm and steadfast in saying to Fauntroy, "You can have West Potomac Park."

This was by agreement with the attorney general and the District government and all the other people who had been involved in these numerous, numerous meetings among ourselves. It was at this table that morning, May 8, on a Thursday, that Fauntroy came up with the idea of the site that we finally selected. It struck me, "My God, I've been blind all along, because this is ideal. It's sheltered; it's not as visible; it's more out of the way." And so, before they would have a chance to change their minds, I said, "Look. fellows, let's jump in a couple of cars and go over there and take a look."

And we did just that. I called and had one of our Park policemen come with a Polaroid camera. You see, I knew these guys were leaving that day to see Abernathy on the final site approval or selection. I wanted them to take pictures with them to show Abernathy what a good site it was. So I got a Park Police photographer down there, and he met us while we were there and I had him photograph the site with the Polaroid. He took and developed the pictures right there and gave them to Fauntroy and Henry. I think Lafayette was with us at that time, and Reeves. Reeves was with us at that time.

We took a look and walked around the whole area. They were impressed with it. They became very excited about it, and they said, "Well, if you'll let us have this site, we'll take it."

They had to get to Friendship Airport to catch an airplane for Atlanta. I didn't want them to miss that plane. So I got a police car, a park police car, and I had them rushed to Friendship Airport. They talked with Abernathy and showed him the pictures and he agreed, and Fauntroy called me back, saying, "We settled on that site."

Then we started putting the permit--refining the permit. And we made a date to meet with them on the next day, Friday, and I think that was--

F: They were coming right back from Atlanta?

C: Oh, yes, they came right back that night, and I made a date to meet with them the next day and hammer out a permit. Our meeting took place in the Interior Building. I didn't want it here, because I didn't want the press to be around. In fact, we selected a rather isolated room in the Interior Building and even so, we didn't escape the press totally. UPI [United Press International] or AP [Associated Press], I've forgotten, one of their reporters got hold of it, and he was waiting right outside the door.

We convened over there about ten o'clock and signed the permit about 4: 30.

F: Any particularly delicate points?

C: Yes. That's the reason that it took us so long to negotiate it. We were hung up on a number of things, one of them being the bond. We insisted that they post a bond for our protection from the standpoint of damage to the site. This was a point of much discussion and conversation. They wouldn't go along with it.

F: Was the bond supposed to be adequate for recompense, or just more symbolic?

C: Both. I think this. I think that, if we had not encountered the rains, we could have restored the site for $10,000. We asked for a $10,000 bond. They said they would never agree to a bond; that this was a right they had. Curiously enough, Lafayette--Bernard Lafayette--would get on his hind legs every once in a while and make the same speech over and over again to the effect that, "You white men have brought us to this." He'd get on the soapbox regularly throughout the day, and we'd get the same kind of speech. He was hard to deal with. I think the discussion and negotiations would have gone far, far better if this guy had not been around. He talked too much and said nothing except to accuse "whitey" of depriving him of his freedom and his rights and all that nonsense.

F: Well, now, when you finally get to a point where you agree on a provision, who on the other side really can say, "Well, that sounds all right to me," and make it stick? Was that Fauntroy?

C: No, they did it by consent. No, as a matter of fact, it wasn't Fauntroy. They had two lawyers there. They had Roy Clarke and Frank Reeves, and they had Fauntroy and they had Tony Henry, also a reverend and rather a nice fellow--I got to like Tony. And they had Lafayette. Five on their side; on our side we had [Edward] Weinberg and Bernie Meyer, who is his associate in the Interior Department, John McDonald from Justice, and myself--I think four on our side.

F: Bob Owens?

C: No, Bob wasn't there. Bob didn't come into the picture until after the encampment started.

We got hung up on the bond issue; we got-hung up on the marshals' issue. That was very sticky, because they wanted exclusively to have their marshals monitor the

whole thing. They wanted no policemen in the camp at any time, so we got hung up on that.

There were other points on which we had a lot of difficulty, so that we--I know one important consideration here was the length of the encampment. They wanted to continue until July 31, and we had a heck of a time coming to a resolution on that aspect of things, because we felt that we couldn't conscientiously agree to a period of that length. And finally, we agreed to the dates of May 10 to June 16, and we extended it for one week after that. They started their operation--we agreed that they would start their operation on Saturday, May 11, and expire at 8 p.m. on Sunday, June 16.

F: Did you play any role whatsoever in helping get the people in here and settled? Or was that strictly their operation?

C: It was strictly their operation. I recall that, at these negotiations on the permit, the issue which hung us up the most was the bond issue. As a matter of fact, we broke up for lunch and had Weinberg's secretary bring us some lunch from the cafeteria. They sat in one room and talked, and we went to another room and talked. Finally, we decided that we would scale the bond down to $5,000. They wanted $1,000, so we dropped it from $10,000 to $5,000 and they agreed. And they agreed to post a cash bond. I had quite a time getting that cash deposit from them. I kept needling Leroy Clarke and finally, he came through with the check, and it's still on deposit. They have never recovered it; we have not released it. I am not sure how that is going to be resolved, because we filed a claim against them. I communicated with them for about two months and nothing happened, so I turned it over to the solicitor of the Interior Department to collect. He failed, and he turned it over to Justice, and what Justice is doing with it I have no idea,

except that I had an indication from one of their lawyers about last November that Reeves had agreed to come and sit down and talk with me in hopes of making an out-of-court settlement.

We concluded our negotiations about 4:30 p.m.

F: Did you hold a press conference then?

C: No. I didn't hold any press conferences.

F: You made no pronouncement?

C: I held no press conference. The agreement was that they would make the announcement, and Dick Sullivan, who is the chief counsel of the House Public Works Committee, by agreement with me at Ken Gray's request--Congressman Gray's request--was to be informed when the negotiations were completed, and the Congressman would issue a statement. This is what got him in trouble with his constituency out in Illinois. He tried to take too big a part in this thing. And it almost killed him politically.

As soon as we finished our negotiations and signed the permit, I called Sullivan and said to him, "You can release it at five o' clock, Dick." Apparently, they jumped the gun on us a little bit. This caused us a little problem with SCLC because they were going to be the first ones to make the announcement, but we overcame that finally.

We started talking about the Mayor a while ago, and I'm not sure that I quite finished. I have to say that Walter did concern himself quite extensively. For example, he would go into the camp from time to time, and they would see him, and I think he helped ease the tensions merely by his presence, by virtue of the fact that he is a Negro. He did identify with Mrs. [Coretta Scott] King when she came to visit a time or two, participating with her in a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial on one occasion, which I

think helped ease tensions. He did keep in touch with us. One of the interesting things is that we had Solidarity Day on June 19--this was just a few days before we folded up the camp.

This is an interesting story in itself because they had retained Bayard Rustin, who is a quite highly respected Negro and who had a great deal to do with the staging of the 1963 march on Washington, to head up Solidarity Day wherein they sought to bring in another 200,000 people to demonstrate. Apparently, there was no really good communication between SCLC and Rustin, and the whole thing disintegrated to the point where Rustin pulled out, and suddenly, within a matter of a few days before the event, they were without a leader to put on the show for them. So they got Sterling Tucker, who is a local Negro and is now the vice chairman of the City Council, to head this up. We worked with Sterling and made all the arrangements for that event.

One of the problems that faced us was that the Puerto Ricans of New York wanted to come to support the Resurrection City program and campaign, and they told us that they wanted to bring 5,000 people on buses from New York to participate in a special demonstration to sustain and back up what these people sought to do. I tried to discourage them from coming down and joining forces with them. By that time, we had experienced a lot of violence, a lot of crime, a lot of apprehension throughout the city. After a number of discussions with their leaders whom we asked here from New York and with whom we met in the Justice Department, we convinced them that they ought to have a separate event on the Washington Monument grounds on a Saturday. I am happy to say that the thing went off in a very orderly way.

F: Your selling point was for them not to get lost in the Resurrection City picture, but to have their own identity?

C: My point was to try to keep them separated as much as we could.

F: I mean from a standpoint of selling them?

C: That's right. In other words, we had numbers enough then, and we didn't want to add to those numbers, because we would just aggravate the situation. We finally convinced them that they ought to have their exercise on the Washington Monument grounds on another Saturday. They wanted to demonstrate on a day when we felt that it would not be strategically correct. We felt that this would aggravate the situation as a whole, so we arranged for them to have the demonstration on the Washington Monument grounds--and that's the only occasion--or the first occasion on which I saw Abernathy.

F: That late?

C: That late. I had never seen him before. I avoided him because I didn't feel very kindly toward him, because of all the grief that we had experienced.

F: Now, something came up and you needed to get in touch with some SCLC person. Was there a kind of headquarters where you could do it? Did the Pitts Motel supply that operational center, or where did you go?

C: I went to their lawyers. Clarke or Reeves, either one. They maintained offices at 1401 U Street in Northwest Washington. All of my consultations and discussions with respect to the operation were with them. Once in a while I would try to reach Fauntroy, but Fauntroy faded out of the picture. Once the operation began, he faded out and became--I don't know whether he became *non grata* with them or what, but I never once saw him in that camp. I talked with him once or twice, asking for help about--I did see him in the

camp--that was on the occasion we had the snow fence problem. But it was the only time. And he sort of faded away. To this day, I'll never understand why.

F: Did the other groups, like the NAACP and the Urban League and so forth, show any great positive interest in this?

C: To my knowledge, they showed no interest at all. I think they rather washed their hands of the whole thing. That has been one of their problems in unifying the Negro and the civil rights movement. They're so splintered. I'm not sure they will ever succeed in bringing together the kind of leadership they want to put together. I think King was the nearest thing they had--or ever will have.

F: Did Mrs. King represent a positive symbol, or did she just sort of make herself available?

C: I think Mrs. King is just as committed as her husband was to carrying on the movement that he began. I think she's a highly respected American. For one thing, she's quite attractive. I have seen her, and she seems to be very pleasant. I have never talked with her. But I am struck with the fact that she has very lady-like qualities. There's no doubt about it. She would stand out in any company, I think. And she is the symbol of Martin Luther King. I think that many of the things Abernathy does, he probably does in consultation with her, even now, for he has assumed the mantle of leadership, so-called. I honestly never will feel that Abernathy has totally assumed that mantle; I don't think he ever will.

F: You don't think the capacity is there?

C: I don't think he has the quality of leadership they need.

F: Walter Washington's wife is very highly placed in the OED [Office of Economic Development]. Did this get involved in Resurrection City at all?

C: Not one bit. I don't recall that I ever saw Bennetta Washington there. I did see Walter several times, but I don't recall ever seeing--

F: Did Walter's image sort of get put into an "Uncle Tom" category as the result of his trying to bridge gaps?

C: If so, I never heard it said.

F: It didn't adversely affect him?

C: No, I don't think so. I don't think it affected him either way. But his presence helped us. No doubt about it. Walter had a quieting influence. He still has it, thank God! I think in the case of the anniversary of King's death more than any individual in this city, he is the guy who kept things cool, literally. By going to four demonstrations that they held on that day and holding that memorial service for King--that was very well thought out.

F: Were there other people who assisted in this whose roles should be mentioned?

C: I think so. In addition to Ramsey Clark, who played a very important and somewhat effective role, Warren Christopher. John McDonald, Rob Owens from Justice--there are one or two others, I think--Ed Weinberg, in particular, the Interior Department solicitor. Ed is one of the most brilliant lawyers I have known in my life, one of the nicest people I have known in my life. He stayed with us during the exercise, devoted lots of time and attention to it.

Another fellow that I think was quite effective is Stephen Pollak, who used to be a special assistant to the President for District of Columbia affairs and then became an assistant attorney general, identified with the Civil Rights Division of Justice. Steve was always accessible on occasion to advise and help. He sat in and testified at some of the hearings on the Hill. I think Fred Vinson. Jr., although extremely conservative, I always

felt, offered sound advice and showed great wisdom. I used to get impatient with Fred because he is so methodical in his thinking and so precise in everything. I found it a little frustrating at times to try to get answers from him.

F: He won't leap ahead when you're ready to move?

C: No, and that was one of my problems with him. As fond as I am of him, I could never get over the time he took to think things out before he would reach a judgment. I think it's his ultra-conservatism, probably based on previous experiences with this kind of thing, that prompted him to act in this way.

Ramsey is an extremely wise man. I thought at times that he was probably a little bit overcautious. I felt the same way about Warren Christopher, and I think perhaps the explanation for this is that they had--both of them--a pretty close contact with the White House, with Joe Califano and with the President. They probably predicted their own actions and their own *modus operandi* as a result of those meetings to which we were not privy. On one occasion, Ramsey, Warren, Ed Weinberg and I met with Joe Califano in his office in the White House and brought him up to date. We let him know what our thinking was in terms of a site and the options we had, and I thought Joe was quite helpful to us. Otherwise, Matt Nimetz, who was on Joe's staff, relayed back and forth and served as the intermediary between the White House and us in addition to Ramsey and Warren.

F: You got the feeling that President Johnson was in the background, but riding herd on it at all times? He wasn't leaving it entirely to subordinates?

C: I don't think he could, although nothing was ever said publicly about it. I have no doubt that the President, being the man he is, kept very much abreast of this whole thing, and I have no doubt that the final decision was made right in his office by himself.

F: Were there other people that--?

C: Well, Stewart Udall had a role. It was rather a minor one. Stew is a dear friend of mine, but he rather stayed out of the thing. And so did my boss, the director of the Park Service. I didn't see these two guys for weeks, whereas I was used to doing business with them practically on an everyday basis, but during the time that this exercise was in motion, I had no contact with them at all.

F: You might be interested in my interview with Hartzog. When I brought this up, he said, "Well, Castro will give you the whole story." And I haven't talked with Udall.

Tape 2 of 2

F: At the close of the previous tape, we were talking about the involvement of Secretary Udall and Park Service Director George Hartzog with Resurrection City.

C: The Director is a very busy guy, as is the Secretary of the Interior. I don't know whether I should feel flattered that they let me worry this one pretty much by myself, or otherwise, but I appreciated their vote of confidence. I think they did correctly in staying out of it. Certainly, the Secretary would not have had time for it in the depth in which it needed attention. The Director would not have had the time for it either.

F: They treated it like a Washington-region problem to a certain extent.

C: Exactly that, and since it fell within the purview of this office, it was my responsibility to monitor it.

F: Did they second-guess you?

C: No, not necessarily. They were not in touch with me during this period. In a manner of speaking, I'm glad, because I felt free to make decisions without having to check them out. I kept the Director informed through copies of summaries I wrote to Warren Christopher.

F: But you never got the feeling that if this afternoon you made a decision that you'd have to come back tomorrow and say, "Gentlemen, I can't go through with it."

C: No.

F: I mean, you had the confidence that you could make it stick?

C: I had total freedom in managing--

F: Did the White House ever second-guess you, as far as you know?

C: As far as I know, they did not.

F: When you saw Califano or at any other time with Nimetz or anybody else, did you get a feeling on how the White House felt about 1) site; 2) permit?

C: My recollection is that the White House never concerned itself with that, except--

F: They obviously didn't want it on White House grounds.

C: --except that Lem Johns, who was then the chief of the President's Secret Service detail and with whom I talked a few times, we agreed that we would keep it as far away from the White House as we could. I do not recall ever talking with Nimetz or Califano about the site itself. Lem Johns didn't have to tell me to keep it away from the White House. Instinctively, I knew that.

F: Except from a consultative standpoint, the Secret Service is not really involved in this, is it?

C: Not really, although we make a practice always to check all requests for demonstrations with the Secret Service, especially when they concern the environs of the White House, particularly Lafayette Park, the Ellipse, the Washington Monument grounds, and the sidewalk in front of the White House. Unfailingly, we always check with them and let them know when we have a request for a permit and although they cannot overrule us on issuing a permit--I say, they cannot--I suppose they could, but it has never come to that. We try to use good judgment in making determinations whether we do or do not issue the permits, and they have been helpful to us many times, no doubt about it, because they have intelligence sources that we don't. We receive intelligence through the FBI and also through the Secret Service. You would be surprised at the information we often receive directly through them. They have a good intelligence system, far, far better than our own.

F: Back to Hartzog and Udall. Do you have anything more to say on them?

C: I don't know that I need to say anything more about that. I think I have covered it. I always felt that, if I needed their help, I could count on it.

F: Did you have any problems of liaison with Chief Layton and his police?

C: None at all.

F: There's no friction there or no problems or jurisdiction?

C: No, you see, in the District of Columbia both police forces have concurrent jurisdiction. We have concurrent jurisdiction on District lands; they have concurrent jurisdiction on park lands. That's never a problem.

We did have the problem of insufficient manpower to patrol the perimeters of the camp, and this situation became rather acute because our policemen were asked to

perform longer than eight-hour days. We just could not manage a twenty-four hour operation on an eight-hour a day basis, so I determined that we were simply going to have to call on the Metropolitan Police for help. They gave us about a dozen men, and we used these men around the perimeter of the camp as we used our own. This added police presence was very helpful to us.

We have always had a splendid relationship with the Metropolitan Police. They respond whenever we need them; we likewise respond whenever they need us.

As I look back--I made up my mind that Resurrection City had to fold up on the night of June 20. Solidarity Day occurred on June 19 and following the Solidarity Day exercise, there was some disorder in the ghetto, 14th and U Streets--in that area. Happily, we had by this time learned from the April disorders that we must be ready. Sure enough, when those disorders started, the Metropolitan Police swept in and brought everything under control in very short order. The next night, June 20, I got home about eight o'clock, I guess--I was very tired, exhausted, during the whole period. My hours were extremely long--

F: And always under a strain?

C: Always under great stress, and I never slept well. What I feared was that we would have serious violence where people would get killed or the residents themselves would be injured, and our policemen would be injured, because there were confrontations.

F: There was occasional attempted provocation of the police?

C: Every day. Apropos of this point, I should say to you that before this event started, I made it a point to meet with every member of the United States Park Police and I literally--

F: You mean, in a group, or individually?

C: In groups. And literally, Joe, I conditioned them for the things that they were going to have to face during this time. I pointed out that they were going to be taunted; they were going to be insulted, but that they had to use the utmost of restraint, more restraint than they had ever used in their lives, because what these people wanted was a real confrontation, and that we must do everything to avoid a confrontation. They responded magnificently. If it had not been for that, I daresay, this thing might have taken a totally different turn.

As a matter of fact, on my rounds over there, which were almost daily, I went by and talked with our policemen and asked them how things were going, and I could sense from day to day the pitch building up in them. They were so mad at the insults that they had to take from these people that they were just ready to bash heads.

F: You think you had the ingredients of a Chicago?

C: No doubt about it. For this reason I kept my eyes wide open to discern any indications of any inclinations to react in such a way that we would indeed have confrontations. On more than one occasion I asked the chief of the Park Police to remove men from there and replace them, because they were getting very tense. They were at a point where any little incident could have touched off a big riot and great disorder and violence. Several times I detected members of the United States Park Police who were on duty day after day being emotionally upset over the things that they had to contend with, the insults and the dirty words and all that kind of thing. Happily, we were able to switch them and move them out and others in. We kept rotating them on a regular basis. This helped.

F: I presume there's a direct cumulative psychological effect on how long or how much overtime a man puts in on this as to how quickly he will snap under pressure.

C: Absolutely no doubt about it. Their patience would only endure up to one point, and beyond that, they could be expected to react in ways that you and I cannot forecast.

The point that I started to make had to do with the night of June 20. I went home and arrived about eight o'clock, got in the shower, put on my pajamas and had dinner. I was going to watch TV for thirty minutes and go to bed and just about nine o'clock, Warren Christopher rang me on the telephone. He said, "Nash, I think you'd better get down to Resurrection City. I'm very fearful that we're going to have a tremendous explosion down there tonight." I asked him what was up, and he said, "Your policemen have gassed the residents of Resurrection City." This represented the first time that we used gas. We had used it in an isolated case or two where some of the militants got rambunctious and threw rocks at passing cars on Independence Avenue and insulted people as they went by. There were a few occasions when they were massing up to engage in mischief and the police dispersed them by occasional tear gas bombs.

On this particular occasion, June 20, apparently they had marched to the Department of Agriculture and on their way back confronted the police at 17th and Independence--this about dark, or a little after dark. The police gassed them liberally because they started throwing rocks and sticks and bottles and cans. They used baby food cans as missiles, and the police reacted. The police were at the breaking point, and checked them with gas, but the Metropolitan Police brought in two hundred and fifty men. We had a command post on the Washington Monument grounds at the Survey Lodge, which is right close to Independence Avenue on 17th Street, right east of the

Resurrection City site. We maintained communications there with everybody, the military, the--

F: You put in special lines and--?

C: Oh, yes, special lines and equipment of all kinds, and we manned that operation twenty-four hours a day. When Warren called me, he said, "You must get down there as quickly as you can and see if you can't do something about not letting this thing get any worse."

So I got dressed very quickly and on the way in, I called Al Beye on the telephone--

F: How far do you live?

C: Seventeen miles from town, in Fairfax. On the way in, I telephoned Al Beye, the deputy chief who worked on a day-to-day basis on this exercise--and the chief managed the rest of the force--but we asked Beye to address himself exclusively to Resurrection City during this time, and he did a tremendous job. I asked Al what had happened and he said, "This group returned from their march, and when they got across the street at 17th and Independence, they started pelting us with rocks and sticks and cans and the whole works." And he said, "Before it got any worse, Jerry Wilson and I"--Jerry Wilson being the deputy chief of the Metropolitan Police Department--"jointly decided that the only way to check them was to gas them;" so they did just that. And then the Metropolitan brought in reinforcements of two hundred and fifty--we had sixty men there at the time.

I got there a little after nine-thirty, I guess. And all the streets were blocked. You couldn't get into the place. Finally, I came up 15th Street and turned left on Independence, and one of our policemen was there to let me through, and I went to Survey Lodge and Beye told me what had happened. Then he said, "Come with me. I

just want you to see what that place looks like." It looked like a battlefield. 17th Street at Independence was full of broken glass, rocks, sticks, boards--

F: Where did they get the rocks? This isn't rocky country. Had they hoarded them?

C: I guess they did. I don't know. There were a few rocks in the area to the south of Resurrection City. We had some open ground in there where it's too shady for grass, and there are a few rocks exposed there. By the time I arrived, the thing was over. You could still smell some of the gas and feel it in your eyes slightly. Beye had called the electric power company and got them to turn off all the street lights, and he had brought in some big searchlights and was training these on the perimeters just to make sure that they didn't come out again and try to confront them.

This brought a good number of people out there that night, from Justice, from the Metropolitan Police Department especially. John Layton, as I recall, was there. Of course, the press was there. And after hearing the story of this confrontation and the turn that it could have taken if it had not been checked, I recall saying to Al Beye, "This is the absolute end. I'll not sign any extension of their permit."

This was on Thursday night. We had met that afternoon with--

F: You had, by this time, made a one-week extension?

C: By this time, we had extended the permit for one week.

F: That was without any particular argument?

C: Well, the rationale that we used on this was that they had set June 19 as Solidarity Day. Their permit actually ended on June 16. We didn't want a confrontation by not permitting Solidarity to come off on June 19, so we thought it the better part of wisdom to extend the permit for one week, until June 23.

F: Before you get into this, I want to ask one question. That is, there was criticism the night after Solidarity Day, when you had the incipient riots in the Northwest that didn't come off, that Walter Washington overreacted.

C: I don't think Walter Washington overreacted at all.

F: Of course, I know on the other hand, there were no riots.

C: That's right, but the truth is that if he had not reacted as he did, we might have had another April 4 situation, the great disorders that we had throughout the city. No, I think Pat Murphy and Walter Washington were perfectly right in checking that thing before it got out of hand.

On that occasion, as I say, I made up my mind that Resurrection City had to come to an end. I had also made up my mind that I was not going to sign any more permits--any more extensions.

It happens that on that very afternoon we had sat around this table with Lafayette, Reeves, and some of the others, including Justice people. It was on this occasion, June 20, that they asked for an extension of the permit until July 31. I knew they were going to ask for an extension, but I had already determined that it would not go that long. It was out of the question, so we met here and talked about it, and I made no commitment at all. I told them that it was very unlikely we would consider any extension beyond June 23 and that they should know this. The event that happened that night, I think, convinced them that they had to close the thing up themselves. As a matter of fact, as I look back, Fauntroy said to me after it was all over that he was delighted we had done as we did, because he realized, too, that it would probably have turned into a bloody massacre before it was over.

F: Did you get the feeling that they were a little tired of Resurrection City themselves?

C: No doubt about it. Greatly relieved. In fact, Fauntroy told me this more than one time--how delighted they were that we had done as we had, and terminated the permit when we did.

Things started warming up a little bit as a result of the date, then June 21, on Friday, first of all, because the permit was coming to a close. Also because of the incident that had happened the previous night. And we met again, I have forgotten how many times now, with Justice and other people. We decided that June 23 would be the close-out date. The problem then was to plan a strategy for bringing this about without confrontation, without bloodshed, without violence. I think it was at a meeting at Justice that we concluded that we would not renew the permit. I would have to check the record, probably one of my summaries, but Saturday and Sunday were days of real pitch and excitement for all of us, knowing that we were not going to renew their permit.

Ramsey Clark and Warren Christopher did a lot of behind-the-scenes work with Abernathy personally, I'm sure. I came here Saturday morning, mostly to try to escape the press, and then I went over to the Mayor's command center. By that time, we were discussing the deployment of the military; we were discussing the deployment of the Metropolitan Police and the Park Police; we got down to planning the exact strategy we would use in terms of notifying them, in terms of providing buses there for those who wanted to leave the city. In this respect, Julian Dugas managed to get some private money somewhere, to hire buses to take them wherever they wanted to go or to pay their transportation out of the city on buses, wherever they wanted to go.

F: How do you spell his last name?

C: D-U-G-A-S. And so Ramsey and Warren began their discussions with Abernathy. They let him know that this was the end, and they were expected to be out of there on Monday morning. We decided it wasn't practical to move them out Sunday night in the dark. It would have been too hazardous, I think. But on Saturday, meaning June 22, we held several meetings where we planned precisely how we would move them out, what kind of a sweep we would make, what kind of equipment the policemen would wear, what role the Metropolitan Police would take, what role the Park Police would take, what role the Army would take.

One fact I haven't told you is that the Army was always in the wings, always ready to come in.

F: You didn't ever use it, but you could have?

C: We could have. They were on a standby alert where we could have brought them into the city from various places.

F: Where would they have come from?

C: Partially from Fort Belvois, from Fort Myer, Fort Meade, and other places. For example, on Solidarity Day, they were in the wings, in fact, so ready, that they stood by their trucks at these various posts, ready to board the trucks, ready to rush in. This, as you know, is one of the nine encampment areas that we have for the army in the District--I mean, my office site here is one of them. We had readiness reports on the park every day throughout the whole exercise, and these reports were communicated to us at our--

F: You were anticipating a possible real sort of donnybrook at the finish?

C: No doubt about it. As we did on Solidarity Day. We were afraid that we might have the same kind of disorders as in April, and it was for that reason that the Army was poised

and ready to go. They were always poised, in some cases on a shorter alert than in other cases. This was reassuring to me. Thank God they were there in case of need.

In respect to Saturday, June 22, I spent most of the day at the command center discussing the strategy for Monday, for notifying them and so forth, and, of course, the press kept incessantly after us. Happily, they never found out where I was.

F: Did you have a public announcement by now that you would not extend the permit?

C: No. We did not.

F: This was still up in the air.

C: You see, we were afraid that this would give them an opportunity for a confrontation, and that's the thing we wanted to avoid. So the way things developed is this: we met in Ramsey's office on Sunday afternoon, going there from the command center, and if I'm not mistaken, I never did get home that Saturday night--maybe it was Sunday night. I guess it was Sunday night. I was so weary in the command center where we had about half a dozen cots. About ten o'clock I decided to take a little nap. Bette tells me that she called to find out about when I would be home--this was about eleven o'clock--and Tom Fletcher said to her, "He's sound asleep," and she said, "Don't wake him up." So I slept soundly until about six the next morning.

F: The best night you'd had in some time?

C: Yes. I went over to the Justice Building, I think, about five o'clock and met with Ramsey and Warren and John McDonald. We had no representation from the Mayor's office. I think I had Ed Weinberg with me, our solicitor. We composed the letter to SCLC, telling them that no further extension would be granted and that by this letter, we were informing them all persons living in the permit area must leave. The script was worked

out in these conferences between Abernathy and Ramsey and Warren Christopher. It was practically a script in that the arrangements were made that there would be buses available to take people to the bus stations, and there would be an announcement over the P.A. system at precisely 10:00 a.m., and they would all be asked to leave, and told the permit had expired. We determined that we would cut their power and telephone communications at precisely 10:00 a.m. We were ready for anything.

As it turned out, the stage was set for Abernathy to lead as many people as were going to depart the camp and walk up to Capitol Hill and be arrested. They followed the script. Abernathy did set out with his marchers and they went to Capitol Hill--

F: This was more or less a symbolic arrest and predetermined?

C: Yes, exactly that.

F: And it didn't bother any of you from a--

C: No, not a bit. My concern was getting them out of there, folding up the camp, and forever wiping out all evidences of it. And by prearrangement, they walked up there and had their confrontation; they were arrested and put on buses and hauled to jail, which is in accordance with the plan.

F: I remember everyone seemed to be happy and joking as they marched off to jail on this occasion.

C: Oh, I'm sure they were. Lots of people were. And I was among them because I think the situation demanded we do just that. Anyway, the stage was set for the eviction, and eighty-two or eighty-four of them decided that they were not going to leave, that they would indeed have to be evicted. We had reports through our intelligence network that they had guns--one machine gun--and that some of the militants were armed for a real

showdown. Our Metropolitan policemen who made the sweep from east to west, starting at 17th Street and going west, were well protected that day. They wore their helmets; they wore their flak vests; they wore their battle gear actually, their gas masks. You know, when you put all that equipment on a man, he looks pretty formidable. They went methodically in one solid wave, inspecting every hut, removing those people who hadn't left--not roughing them up, handling them gently so that there would be no indications that they had to use brutality, and they were cautioned against this. And the sweep went without event--

F: There was no resistance to--

C: No resistance. They absolutely withered. No guns were fired, some of them had to be helped out, but happily, nobody was injured. Nobody was scratched; nobody was hurt. The whole operation ended at twelve-twenty. In all this time, I was at the command center. I couldn't do any good on the site; I had to stay at the command center because things still kept coming up. For example, the power company refused to turn off the power without an absolute request signed by me, and their representative showed up there, so I signed it. The telephone company did not present a problem; we asked them to turn off the telephone communications at such-and-such a time, and they did. The power company did come through at precisely ten o'clock. They had absolutely no communications.

The sweep was over by twelve-twenty, and then we took the place over. We posted policemen all around the perimeter that day.

F: There was no attempt at reentry?

C: No attempt at reentry whatsoever. I have to say that I took the time, when I learned that the sweep had been successful and that nobody had been hurt, to say a prayer of thanks. I was so relieved and so grateful that we had come through this thing in that way.

After that, we sent out for sandwiches, and I really enjoyed my meal. I'll never forget it. I was so relieved about this that I thoroughly enjoyed every bite, which I hadn't been doing for several weeks.

And immediately after it was over and after I had had my lunch, I got together with John McDonald in his office. He had arranged for SCLC representatives to come there and discuss the terms of the cleanup and restoration of the site. Lafayette was to have shown up for this, but he did not. Instead, they sent about a third or a fourth or even a fifth-string of young Negroes who were really in a daze. They disbelieved the fact that we had literally evicted them, and I don't know how best to describe this except that each one of them was totally dazed, unbelieving that this happened.

And we, very businesslike, very politely, asked them how they planned to go about removing the shanties and restoring the site, and they said that they were sure they could get a hundred and fifty men together to come in there and do it. And I said, "We are not going to permit you back in that camp. We will agree to your doing this if we can be very selective about who goes in there. Otherwise, you can get a contractor to come in and do it, but we're simply not going to have your people going back and perpetuating this encampment," which I was sure they would do.

They were so disorganized that it would have taken them sixty years to do the job, the way they operated and mismanaged. So we told them point blank that we had the capability to do this, and that we were not going to give them the option of doing it

themselves because we didn't think they had the capability, or the organization, or the resources. We were going there immediately, we told them, and wanted them to go with us, that they could monitor the dismantling and removal of things to make sure nobody appropriated anything that belonged to them. They didn't agree, of course. They insisted on doing it themselves, and we very quickly declined, and then we drove over to the site. I took them over in my car, and I'll never forget the observation made by one of the Negroes who sat next to me. He saw my telephone and said, "You have a telephone in your car," and I said, "Yes. It comes in very handy." And he said, "That's where all my tax money goes."

And I thought to myself, this guy probably doesn't pay any taxes. But this same youngster--he must have been twenty-two or twenty-three--I felt very sorry for him, because he said that he had left a job in Atlanta, expecting to stay here all summer. He said, "Now, I don't have a job and I don't have a home. I don't have a place to go." We advised him how to go about getting accommodations until he could leave town.

At two-thirty, two hours and ten minutes after we evicted them, we had a crew of workmen in there starting the sweep, packing all the stuff that was left behind and removing the shanties. I must give credit to a guy named Harry Van Cleve, who is the chief counsel of GSA and whom you probably know, because he was a pivot man for GSA on this. I selected one of our staff people, Roger Sulcer, to coordinate for us. I talked with Tom Arris [?] of the District, and he agreed to send in some men and equipment to help, and between the three of us and employing, I would say, two hundred and fifty men at one time, we started the cleanup.

This began on a Monday. As I recall, we had everything down and out by Thursday. We had graders in there by Tuesday, regarding the site. We made arrangements for a contractor to bring in twelve acres of turf and sod the area. In a matter of a couple of weeks, you wouldn't have known anything had happened there.

F: What do you figure Resurrection City cost you?

C: In police overtime alone, it cost us $240,000. The restoration of the site cost $71,795, of which we have $5,000 in cash in lieu of a bond. Then we sold the lumber, with their consent by the way, for $5,000.

F: Do you think SCLC leaders thought it was a failure?

C: I'm sure they did. I don't see how they could assess it in any other way. My regret is that I think they had a glorious opportunity to make a point, but they blew it because of their totally erratic ways.

F: Just no organization at the top?

C: There was total disunity in the organization, and therein lies the problem. If it had not been for that, I think they could have made a great success of it. I think they did succeed in focusing attention on the plight of the poor. We have seen the aftermath of this with more attention on the part of the Congress, more attention on the part of the Executive departments. From that point of view, I think that they did succeed. But their success would have been even grander and better and bigger if they had not alienated so many people and more especially, the Congress. Many of their staunch supporters on the Hill turned completely around and disowned them. They became totally disenchanted with them.

F: Any idea why they didn't turn it over to somebody like Bayard Rustin or Sterling Tucker who had experience in managing this sort of thing on a large scale?

C: I have no way of assessing that.

F: Of course, that's not your problem.

C: No, but I do know one thing, that unless these people acquire some management know-how, they can never make a success of this particular kind of episode, nor of their goals and objectives for SCLC.

I think they lack unity. That's where their problem lies. They don't have one spokesman for SCLC, even though Abernathy is represented as their spokesman. But in truth I don't think he ever will be. I don't feel the man has the qualities of leadership it takes to make a success out of the movement that King started. He just hasn't got them.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview IV]

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