INTERVIEW V

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Tape 1 of 2

MG: I want to begin by asking you what was President Johnson's conception of what the War on Poverty should be?

JG: Well, I'm probably not the right one to ask that question. Bill Moyers was far more deeply involved in the origins, as was Sarge Shriver, and those are the two you really should talk to about that. What I saw in two and a half years of handling the White House side of the War on Poverty was that he favored it largely because of his instincts for opportunity as contrasted with handouts. He was very strongly anti welfare-type programs, and OEO kind of came at the problems of the poor in terms of opportunity. The President always seemed very supportive of that.

On the other hand, he was hit almost from inception with enormous problems, problems of really any program designed to help a small segment of our country. The fact is this was not like an education program where 70 per cent of the American people benefited. This was really designed to help those who couldn't very well help themselves, who had no political clout. And as a result, it and the nature of its programs caused a lot of problems. This is not unusual.

But I think the fact is that the poverty program and Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education, which were the main programs for the poor, were kept year after year only because of the very strong support that the President gave to them. Both of them got into trouble almost immediately after Johnson left office. It's understandable. There's just no constituency there.

Community Action, which is the subject of the memo, was probably the most troublesome, because it was a broad umbrella under which communities could try almost anything they wanted to try as long as it was directed at problems of the poor. Almost by definition they had problems of accounting and charges of rip-offs. Some of them were bad and some of them were very good. But they created enormous political problems in the cities. The mayors were always complaining about them because they didn't have control over them. Originally all Community Action grants went directly to community groups, and the local political types didn't like that at all. Over time, because of political problems and political pressures in Washington, the local governments got control over Community Action Programs, at least veto power.

But it was understandable. I mean, they were doing tough and difficult things. One organization would have a program for ex-convicts; another would have a program for juvenile delinquents. An ex-con commits another robbery--that's not much of a story, but if he's at that point working for a Community Action agency, it's

very interesting political news. Those things were happening all over the country.

MG: Was Lyndon Johnson prepared to deal with the political pressures that the Community Action Program would cause? Did he take this in stride and view it as something that was inevitable and something that should, in fact, be a part of the program?

JG: I always get uncomfortable when I'm asked to speak for anybody and particularly a president. I can't really answer that question in terms of how he personally felt. In terms of what he did, one, there were a lot of people in the Executive Office who spent an awful lot of time fighting for the poverty program, keeping it alive, in terms of even the President himself. I think without his support it never would have survived during that period. Would he take on every one of the political problems? Clearly not. Did he like some of the trouble? Clearly not. And we worked very hard to bring more accountability to the program as it got off the ground. We worked very hard with Shriver and [Bertrand] Harding and the others to make it a better program and to come to grips with some of the things that were causing political problems. But I think the answer is that through the President and his staff there was a great deal of support for the program, not in the sense of saying that fraud or political problems at the local level are excusable and understandable, but rather to take the strengths of the program and build on them and try to make something out of it.

I think the reason that you don't see as easily in the record of his presidency his extensive involvement in the War on Poverty is that the OEO program itself was a very small part of it. Most people tended then, and I think they do today, to look at performance within areas: education and health and manpower. And we did, too. The question is, what impact did it have there? That's if you start looking closely there, you will find an enormous impact pushed almost exclusively by the President. Manpower programs, when Johnson took office, were almost exclusively for white males: many programs for sons of union workers, people likely to break into the trades, and almost nothing at all available for minorities who were the hard-core unemployed. Through the efforts of OEO and the President and, over time, the Department of Labor--but it really was over time--that all got turned around so that by the time Johnson left office there was a very substantial program in the manpower area, a very significant amount of federal money being spent on programs for the disadvantaged, for the minorities, for the hard-core unemployed.

Now that was a fundamental part of the poverty program, but you wouldn't see it if you just looked at OEO. OEO, I think, really got it started because it had money that it could concentrate on the disadvantaged. As a result, the Department of Labor, but more importantly, the state departments administering manpower programs wanted to get those funds. Shriver wouldn't give them those funds unless they would redirect their own efforts towards the poor. The

same thing happened in health, with neighborhood health centers and other programs. The big impact of OEO was not in its own neighborhood health center program, but the enormous impact it had in terms of redirecting what HEW was doing in the health field.

All of that, which was basically a shift from middle-income beneficiaries to the more needy in our population, to children, to prevention, all of those kinds of things, were because the President, using the White House, the Executive Office, particularly the Council of Economic Advisers and OEO, was able to turn HEW around. And some really super people, like Phil Lee, believed in it very definitely and with John Gardner and Wilbur Cohen worked very hard to bring it about. But those were enormous changes over that period of time. The same thing in education, again, redirection to the needs of the poor.

MG: Some of the memos there seemed to indicate an awareness of a certain inevitable political tension as new groups under Community Action would enter the political process. I'm wondering, if we compare the Community Action Program to Lyndon Johnson's advocacy of the Voting Rights Act, he seemed very interested in widening the political process. Did he ever, in your presence, refer to this aspect of Community Action, the fact that it was a real way to generate power among low-income groups or people who had not had political power?

JG: No, he did not, although a lot of the organizers of OEO and the people who were running it felt very strongly that you had to give

the poor a voice in the political process before they could bring about any change. I think that the analogy is probably not fair insofar as the President is concerned. I think he saw in all of the civil rights laws, and particularly the voting rights, a direct correlation between eliminating the barriers and giving people a chance that they really could do something.

My guess is that he did not feel that way about Community Action, mainly because it wasn't clearly defined. Community Action was everything. It was everything to everybody. While you knew what voting rights meant, and you knew what fair housing meant--and he fought very hard for those--I don't think that anybody knew exactly what Community Action was. Because all it was saying is that each community ought to have some funds to try to develop programs to meet their own needs. In one community it was a water purification effort, that they had a stream going through some little Appalachian town that was polluted, and they put together a little program to clean it up and it made an enormous impact on that little community. In another it was dealing with ex-cons. They really ran the full gamut. I never had a sense that the President was out in front the way he was with some of the other programs, as saying there's something about Community Action that really is going to--through the political process--change the lives of these people.

MG: How about your own attitude toward Community Action? By the time you started working with OEO from the White House did you have a certain well-defined view of what it ought to be?

JG: No, I guess not. The longer I was there the more important I thought it was that local communities have funds to try new things. And the longer I tried to find answers to all of society's problems the more convinced I became that it was far better than for Washington to tell people what to do, to let them try, and recognize at the outset that a lot of mistakes would be made. In that sense I was very supportive of Community Action. I also became very troubled about some aspects of Community Action, particularly as more and more requirements were built on for representation. They basically became places where people screamed at each other rather than doing something.

It was a little like Model Cities, which was a very interesting dream, that you could somehow get everybody to work together, and you could get all segments in the political system, state and local and federal governments, to work together. We knew long before Model Cities got into trouble that it wasn't going to work. Even the federal government, with the President directing the departments to cooperate, couldn't deliver their programs. When the local communities designed a Model Cities program, say that had Education and Labor money going together to focus on a community problem, with some state money and local money, we couldn't even deliver the federal money. Well, those problems were very much the same as the Community Action problems. Because over time the Congress and federal regulations required more and more people to be involved before you could really have the programs funded. There was a lot of chaos.

So I had those kinds of concerns: one, that we really needed experimental money--we desperately need it today, and we did then--for people to try different things, because a lot of them worked. There were some very good things that came out of Community Action agencies that are now duplicated all across the country. And there were a lot of mistakes and there was a lot of money wasted, but that's true of almost anything important that happens in our society. If you look at basic research, you know, it's well less than 1 per cent of the money that is really productive long term but the effect is enormous.

MG: You mentioned the whole range of projects. In some of your memos there is a theme there that you ought to present more of the successful programs to the President's attention and the press' attention. Was there a tendency to focus only on the Community Action Programs that created controversy?

JG: Oh, absolutely. I mean, that was good news. You travel around the country a lot. Just read the newspaper. It's those wonderful exciting murders that get the front page; it isn't that some community college is doing great things to educate a particular segment of the community.

MG: How did you yourself monitor the Community Action Program? Did you have any way of observing the good programs as well as those that, say, brought letters from mayors to the President?

JG: No. We worked very hard with Sarge and Bert Harding to understand what was going on, to get them to do more in the way of reporting.

We worked very closely with them in terms of developing messages to the Congress on an annual basis, in making sure that we had the ammunition as these stories--it really was one bad apple out of a hundred was the one that everybody wanted to write about. It was important to be able to answer that. Unfortunately, that's very hard to do. I remember the time--it wasn't a Community Action Program but it was in the manpower area--John Lindsay got upset about something that was happening and went to the New York Times. Well, it was impossible to answer that. The bad publicity really did hurt that program. I'm not sure there was anything you could do about it. We tried very hard to get out the good news in many ways. OEO was producing a lot of materials. But you just couldn't get the same coverage, particularly in the Congress.

MG: Did you have a difficult time presenting this good news to the President, to more or less counter the bad news? Was there a way that he could become aware of the successful programs?

JG: Yes, but it was much more difficult. The fact is that he'd get a call from a senator or a congressman about the bad news and only periodically would he get the good reports. But he visited a lot of these programs. If you look through his messages, he did know a lot of what was going on.

We tended, over time, to de-emphasize the Community Action label. My own view is that whoever picked that label--it was probably Shriver--that was the one mistake he made. He was incredibly inventive in terms of all of the titles that he came up with:

Head Start and Upward Bound. All of those were wonderful. Community Action struck most people as a violent kind of movement. In those times, as there was more and more violence in our society, that became a much more unfortunate label. As I recall, all of the materials which we prepared for the President, we avoided the use of that label. I think if you look through presidential messages, you might find Community Action mentioned once. In fact, we described what was happening in the programs but we didn't use the labels.

MG: Was that on his orders or your own strategy?

JG: I'm sure that those were our instincts. Whether he was ever conscious of that, I wouldn't know. If he had ordered a change in it, it would have been in a discussion with Joe [Califano].

MG: Was he disappointed in the way the program turned out? Aside from, say, a particular case of embarrassment, did you ever hear him express disappointment with the program in its entirety, the Community Action Program?

JG: Not the Community Action Program. I'm not sure that he ever really focused very much on that label, as such. It was much more on all of the things that OEO was doing. The fact is that other than the war, he probably got more political heat out of OEO than anything else. I'm sure there were times when that was expressed. I remember I did the briefing one year on the message and he was upset about it. I can't remember exactly why, but my guess is that he was getting kicked around so much, even [for] the good things that he fought for and did. When the Congress cut the budget on the Job Corps,

they didn't go marching up to the Congress, they came to see the President. And they were all around the White House. When the Head Start programs got cut by the Congress, they didn't go up to the Congress, the kids from Mississippi came to the White House. The most pathetic thing I've ever had to go through is to go out and talk to those little kids. Or a bunch of Job Corps kids, really the toughest kind of delinquents, who had finally found some hope and spent eight months learning some skills, they had another four months or so to go, and the program was killed. Well, the President got the heat for all of that and that had to be a little unpleasant.

Overall, if you don't focus your attention on the Community Action label, I think he was very proud of what he did there, not just in OEO but through the departments and agencies, with a very different focus in terms of giving the disadvantaged in our society a chance, which is really what this was all about. [That] was something that was very important to him. He did say over and over again, whether it was in education or in health or in manpower or in civil rights, he really wanted to get particularly young people up to an age of seventeen and eighteen on equal footing. Then he thought they could take care of themselves.

MG: Did he ever express the War on Poverty in terms of his NYA experience?

JG: Not to me, but that doesn't mean much, because my contacts with him were quite infrequent. I would be involved when I had completed a program or a message. But those kinds of conversations would much more likely have been with Califano or McPherson or Bill Moyers, but probably either Bill or Joe.

MG: It seems that toward the end of the administration you, in particular, and the White House as a whole seemed more and more inclined to emphasize the employment programs, the jobs programs, the National Alliance of Businessmen. Was this the case?

JG: Well, there is no question about the emphasis on Manpower programs, but not to the exclusion of other things. We worked very hard almost from the first time I came over there to deal with employment programs as kind of the best hope for the employable poor, and as a way to get them on their own feet and carrying themselves and their families, and also coming to grips with discrimination. [We felt] that if you can get people working together side by side they're going to understand one another a lot better and be a hell of a lot more comfortable with their kids going to the same schools.

But I think it's wrong to say that that was to the exclusion of something else. It's just that it took a long time to put it all together, and it involved an extensive reorganization of the budget, of the Labor Department, of the manner in which programs are implemented, and we kind of learned as we went along. We tried to see whether we could create jobs, start new businesses. With the help of the businesses involved and particularly Bob McNamara, we concluded that that was so expensive and so time-consuming that we ought to concentrate our efforts on getting people jobs within the private sector, that they could do a much better job than the government could in terms of training for real jobs. We'd had a lot of experience trying to use public programs to train people

for jobs that weren't there. So anyway, we spent a lot of time and the OEO funds were very important in causing the changes to be made, because it was very hard to get the Employment Service to change anything, which was the traditional avenue for manpower programs. So we did have to spend a lot of time--and that was a big chunk of the OEO budget. No question about it.

MG: To your knowledge, did the President ever lean on the Employment Service? They have received so much criticism for the way they worked in the War on Poverty in recruiting for Job Corps and addressing themselves to the poor. To your knowledge, did the White House ever attempt to improve this situation?

JG: Oh, yes.

MG: Can you recall any specifics?

JG: Oh, the whole structure of the National Alliance of Businessmen, the special job creation and training program before that, eliminating the red tape, all those efforts were basically either designed to get the Employment Service to change by basically contracting with them to do specific jobs or bypassing them. Indeed, part of the reorganization of the Department of Labor was done immediately after the President left office, mainly because he took the view during the last year that if he hadn't been able to get it done by then, he wasn't going to do it. But George Shultz came in, who had headed the Johnson task force on manpower, and he made all the changes that Johnson had deferred. So that his early reorganizations in the manpower area, and indeed the program changes, were

all Johnson's. But this was not a shift in the poverty programs. We were still working very hard on Head Start and Upward Bound and all of the others.

MG: Community Action?

JG: Yes, but Community Action mainly not as Community Action. We were trying to downplay those words that had become politically very troublesome, and we were just trying to keep the funds for all the different things they were doing.

MG: Was the President more interested in OEO in Texas, do you think, than other states? Did he seem to have a particular interest in the program in his home state?

JG: I have no idea.

MG: You don't recall any. . . ?

JG: No sense at all. I think, as was true with almost everyone, the programs that were the most popular with him and those that he visited, tended to be those that you could understand from the label. This is part of the problem that Community Action had from the start; nobody knew really what it was and kind of began to associate it with trouble. But you know, Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, neighborhood health centers, those were the kinds of things--multi-service centers--that he pushed very hard. Those kinds of things he kind of endorsed and became a part of and talked about and visited much more than others.

MG: With regard to Texas, there's an indication that he and Governor [John] Connally disagreed over a number of aspects of the program there.

Were you ever in the position of observing this and possibly working with OEO to solve some of the problems?

JG: No. I never got involved with any Texas problems. We had problems with legal assistance.

MG: The VISTA lawyers or was this legal services in general?

JG: It was legal services, particularly rural legal services, where the governor vetoes--they vetoed the California program at one point. The President throughout was very supportive and basically it was the American Bar Association that kept those programs alive, despite the political heat. When there were government-supported lawyers attacking welfare systems and various state and local programs, there was a lot of political heat.

MG: Well, now this is a good example of LBJ absorbing some of this heat, if he did in fact. Can you recall in more detail what he did?

JG: No, but this happened the whole time that I was there. It happened from the day this program started. He absorbed political heat from start to finish to protect the poverty program. There's no doubt about it. He did for Title I. Those two programs, without him being willing to take the heat and fight like hell for them, would have died the first year. There's no doubt about it. Those votes were very close. Shriver was on the Hill almost daily. At the outset the other departments and agencies were trying to tear it apart and get hold of the money themselves. Even at one point--and there's still some cabinet officers who were very upset with me--we put together the administration's position with respect to

OEO and asked all of the cabinet officers to come over and talk about it and accept that as their position and to quit having their people go up in the Congress trying to tear OEO apart.

MG: This was 1967 I think, is that right?

JG: It sounds like it.

MG: Let's elaborate on that. Did it work?

JG: I think it did. There was an enormous change. I mean, we used to have on any given day about five people working the Hill against OEO.

MG: Couldn't the President control this?

JG: It is very tough. A president has very limited control over the executive branch--that is a fact of life--far less today than Lyndon Johnson did in his days. But in fact there are people all throughout the executive branch who fight for their own views, whether they are consistent with the president's or not. There are many who are representing interest groups and fighting for those interests. They may have come out of some group to take a position and they are still fighting for those interests. And there are an awful lot who in fact have been placed in their jobs from congressional staffs or congressional influence and they're not representing the president, they're representing the person who appointed them. These went down very far. What was unusual for OEO is that it got very close to the top of the departments, and in fact, Shriver and the rest of them at OEO were thorns in the sides of a lot of those agencies. They were constantly saying, "What are you doing kind of doling your money out to people who don't need help? Let's concentrate your money where it's needed."

MG: Do you think this reflects on the whole structure of the War on Poverty? If OEO could not coordinate the other departments or agencies that dealt with poverty, indeed if it was receiving opposition from them, would it have been better to place the director of the War on Poverty in a position closer to the president so that he could control some of this stuff, so that he could coordinate better and direct the various departments involved in the program?

JG: Well, there are a lot of questions involved in what you've just said. One is a kind of fundamental question of government reorganization. I think by and large the super cabinet idea on the domestic side makes a lot of sense. That instead of splitting things up--which is happening again--they ought to be consolidated so that there can be more coordination, and the president can set direction and have a more clearly defined organizational structure to carry it out.

In terms of that enterprise I doubt whether there was a way to have made it more effective than it was. The President did back Shriver and his people for a long, long time and in fact they brought about enormous changes in the way the government conducts its programs. Maybe that was inevitable, but I doubt it, and I think if they had not been outside with large amounts of free money available to do interesting and important things, they could not have caused the traditional agencies to change. I don't think you can administer large programs within the White House. Otherwise you're just building another bureaucracy there.

So I think with the White House and the White House staff, the Budget Bureau, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the President being behind the direction in which OEO was going, and the fact that they were out there completely independent--if you had stuck it into HEW, even with strong direction from the President, I don't think anything would have happened. Nothing very interesting. And I think if you look objectively at the direction of benefits in the federal government as a whole, or redirection from the lower-middle and middle-income class to the poor and disadvantaged and minorities, one, it did happen, and an awful lot of it is a result of what OEO was doing. It might have lasted longer but I'm not sure you could have been more effective in terms of meeting the needs of the poor, which was what their mission was.

MG: Did the President, to your knowledge, ever confront, say, Willard Wirtz and ask him or instruct him to stop opposing OEO on the Hill?

JG: The President didn't, Joe did. But it wasn't Willard Wirtz, okay? It was basically, "Be sure your people aren't up there doing it,"--and the same thing with John Gardner--"and to be stronger in your support for the program. We'll give you some arguments. We'll help beef it up," which is understandable. He had people running programs in the same areas who wanted the OEO money. It was interesting, exciting money, that you could really run good programs [with], so I don't blame the people in HEW for wanting the money. But when it came to going up on the Hill and saying why you thought the OEO programs were terrific, they weren't too enthusiastic because they'd

just as soon have the money themselves. What we were trying to do was to say, "Hey, we're going to lose those programs if you don't help. So please work on your people. We'll give you information; we'll give you facts. You ought to be able to answer all the criticisms from OEO and you've got to be as though you were representing OEO up there, as well as your own department."

MG: Were Labor and HEW the two primary departments that were interested in absorbing the OEO program or its components, or were there others?

JG: A little bit in Agriculture, a little bit in Interior, a little bit in HUD.

MG: I guess in 1967 Wilbur Cohen proposed making Bertrand Harding under secretary of HEW and more or less the notion that he could just bring his program with him. Do you recall that and the President's reaction to it? I think it was based on the notion that OEO would not pass the Congress. Did the President seriously consider that approach?

JG: Not to my knowledge. Now, somebody else may have taken it to him; I don't believe it went through Califano or me to the President. I'm sure it went to Joe. We worked very hard in 1968 to find ways to protect the programs, and some of the things that were new the President said no to. But in terms of kind of putting umbrellas over the various programs, building them quietly into the budget, setting up organizational structures where they would be less politically vulnerable to someone who we thought would not be very

sympathetic, a lot of that work went on. But I don't think anybody took Wilbur's suggestion very seriously. I mean, he was an idea a minute. On the twentieth of January, 1969 he had roughly a ten billion dollar program that he wanted the President to act on before noon. So anyway, there were lots of Wilbur Cohen programs that didn't get to the President.

MG: There was some indication that the delegation of Head Start or perhaps even the spin-off was all but agreed upon and was held up for fear that OEO might have a rough time without it. Do you recall that?

JG: In 1968.

MG: Was that 1968?

JG: I think so.

MG: I guess it was. Was the delegation postponed? Was that reflective of the President's attitude? Or did he favor eventual spin-off or delegation?

JG: I am really very fuzzy on this. I believe that the White House with Shriver and Harding until the very end fought to keep OEO independent.

MG: But I just meant Head Start, within the program.

JG: But I mean that meant keeping Head Start, which was the most glamorous and popular part of the whole program. I think we went along with it in 1968 for fear that if we didn't we'd lose the whole program.

MG: Lyndon Johnson seems to have been very concerned about the possibility of corruption in the program. He seems to have been very interested in auditing the grantees and making sure that there was no misuse of the funds. Was this a major factor with him, and did he take steps to see that misuse was limited?

JG: Well, I can tell you what the White House and OEO did. In terms of the President's own feelings about it, I can't support that statement that you just made. Certainly the President would have said, indeed I think any president would have said, "We're not going to have corruption in federal programs, and we're not going to be wasteful." What we did as problems emerged was to work very closely, particularly with Bert Harding, on the administrative controls and reporting mechanisms for the program as a whole. Califano was deeply involved in that, as I was. So were people from the Budget Bureau and the Council of Economic Advisers. But that was really just a function of a program becoming of age. They launched that incredible mass of programs in a very short period of time, with almost no constraints on the money. If you read the original OEO act, it is an unbelievable piece of federal legislation, because it basically said, "Here is a big pot of money, and you can spend it to alleviate the problems of the poor." They just launched these programs without worrying too much about being able to account for every last penny, feeling it was more important to start addressing the program, start training people, to start getting kids in school, start giving them their first dental checkup, their

first health exam, getting parents involved in early childhood education. All of those things, they just got started and the controls came later. I don't think it was a big emotional thing for the President, just a common sense stance that any president would and should take if people claim that there has been some misuse of federal money.

MG: Let me ask you a few things about Sargent Shriver. How would you characterize his working relationship with the President?

JG: I never understood it. I don't to this day. I'm not sure I know anybody who does, other than Sarge, who is living today. There were a lot of people who suspected that there had to be some real problems there because of the Kennedy relationship, and that there was no secret--certainly during some of these times--about the President's feelings towards some of the Kennedys. But I never saw that in terms of anything he ever did to or for or against Shriver. I must say, I was surprised by the appointment as ambassador to France, an awfully nice gesture at that point in time. All I saw was Sarge, who was a very creative, dynamic, hard-working guy, fighting like hell for the needs of the poor, and the President being with him the whole time.

MG: Did the President ever entertain the notion that Shriver was disloyal to him?

JG: I never saw any sign of that.

MG: He seems to have been under the impression that OEO was full of Robert Kennedy supporters. Did you feel that way?

JG: Well, if you looked at the people who came in originally there were a lot of original Kennedy people over there. After all, the agency was headed by a Kennedy relative, so that's not surprising. But I have no idea how the President felt about Sarge Shriver.

MG: Well, for example, in 1968 a grant announcement was made by Robert Kennedy's California campaign office instead of the White House or OEO. This sort of thing must have had some sort of impact.

JG: I would have assumed that if indeed that happened the President would have been very unhappy about it. But I never saw it. There are obviously a lot of other people who are much closer to the President who must have seen things about the overall Kennedy relationship that I never was exposed to or experienced.

MG: There's an indication that Shriver, by the time you came on, was over-fatigued and was constantly threatening to resign. Do you think--

JG: No, that's just very unfair. Certainly 1966 he was as dynamic as ever.

MG: But he did tender a resignation in 1966.

JG: I was not aware of that.

MG: You didn't see that?

JG: No.

MG: How about the meeting at the Ranch over Christmas in 1966 when reportedly he came down and was talked into staying on? Did you know anything about that? I guess that was when Moyers was still there.

JG: Well, Moyers was still in the White House at that time. But I don't know who. . . .

MG: Well, who did Shriver work with the most in the White House?

JG: Joe and me.

MG: Was that normally the arrangement as opposed to say directly with the President?

JG: That was true for everybody except for Rusk and McNamara, who dealt directly with the President. The domestic secretaries worked principally with Joe, and I think Moyers before that. But I don't know how Moyers operated.

MG: Why didn't Shriver attend cabinet meetings?

JG: I don't know.

MG: Do you know if he was ever invited or if he was considered--?

JG: Well, you know, there are lots of agency heads who do not; they're not cabinet officers. So that's not unusual. OEO was not a cabinet [office] and there have to be, what, twenty agencies.

MG: But it was perceived as something that would coordinate different departments.

JG: Oh, I think it was perceived that way only in terms of initial legislative design. He, in fact, was never given the responsibility for coordinating federal domestic programs.

What you're trying to get at is whether there were significant strains between the President and Shriver, and all I can say is, while there may have been, I did not see them in terms of impacting the personal relationships, the budget, or the efforts to hold the

program together, or the more important impact of OEO in terms of changing the direction of federal programs generally.

MG: Could Shriver generally have access to the President if he wanted it?

JG: I don't know. I would assume so. In fact, I think all of the cabinet officers could have, but very seldom did they ask for it. Normally it went the other way around, that the President would set up meetings working through Joe or Doug Cater or Harry McPherson to deal with a certain substantive problem and they would be invited to come, rather than for them asking to talk to the President.

MG: What sort of changes in OEO did the succession of Harding after Shriver make? Was there a different style that affected the program substantively?

JG: No, I think there was an inevitable political impact. Shriver was unbelievably hard-working and dynamic and very effective with all kinds of people, particularly on the Hill. Bert just wasn't that kind of guy. I think that Bert concentrated more on running the programs as well as he could, but in fact they were in political trouble at that point. The budget was getting hit pretty hard. They were very difficult times. I'm not sure anybody could have turned it around. But they were very different kinds of people, much better as a team.

MG: Did you regard Shriver as a good manager of that agency?

JG: I have not heard people speak glowingly about Shriver as a manager other than in terms of his capacity to inspire, to get good people,

to get people to work hard, inspire great loyalty; Sarge was awfully good at that. You know, he was much stronger when he had a person like Bert Harding with him, who was a very good, careful manager. But that wasn't Sarge's strength. Sarge was much better out there blowing the flute and getting everybody to follow him.

MG: One of the criticisms that has been made of the White House has been that as the program confronted more and more controversy, the President withdrew his support. In the legislative battles of 1967, the White House didn't really come to the support of OEO and didn't think it was going to pass. Can you elaborate on the things that the White House did to help the legislation pass in 1967? This was the year of the Green amendment. Particularly the President. Any calls that he made, any senators or congressmen that he personally leaned on?

JG: I can't, and I'm not sure that means much, mainly because we were on the other side of the house and we were basically focusing on the substance of what was up there. Larry O'Brien and then Barefoot Sanders and the others I think would be much better able to answer that. But I think if I were trying to find out, I'd focus on two programs having the same kinds of problems: Title I of Elementary and Secondary [Education] and the poverty program. In terms of Califano's office and the Budget Bureau, those were very important programs. Most of what we were trying to do--for example, in manpower--were funded there. So we were very concerned.

But I think the lion's share of the credit for holding it together in 1967 was the just almost daily efforts of Shriver, you know, much like in other programs that might have been Larry O'Brien or Barefoot Sanders or Wilbur Cohen. There's always a key guy who is speaking for the President. The President was not up there carrying these bills personally. You take Fair Housing, the White House fought very hard. I'm not sure how many calls the President personally made, but he made one very important one to Everett Dirksen. So it's hard to piece it all together.

MG: Let me ask you a couple of specifics. How about George Mahon? Here was a close friend of the President. Do you recall any contact he may have had with Mahon?

JG: No. You're really on the wrong side of the house for these kinds of questions. I had almost nothing to do with the battles on the Hill. The President sent me up a couple of times to deal with Edith Green.

MG: You met with Senator [Joseph] Clark, too, I think, didn't you, on 1967?

JG: I might have.

MG: You don't recall?

JG: I don't remember that.

MG: Edith Green was getting to be a problem.

JG: She was tough in a lot of areas.

MG: Anything on the administration's acceptance of the Green amendment and how that amendment was hammered out? I gather she was ready to go much farther than that?

JG: It was clearly a compromise. I can't even remember how it worked out precisely. Do you recall, was it an absolute veto?

MG: It was a veto and the one-third representation of the poor, and there was a bypass provision.

JG: Yes, I remember the battle and I know I was in the middle of it, but I can't remember the details.

MG: Sure. [Roman] Pucinski was wavering and it looked like Job Corps might have some real problems.

Do you remember George McCarthy, the legislative man for OEO in 1967? He seems to have fallen from favor with regard to the White House, and was expelled from liaison meetings at the White House. Do you have any indication as to why this was done?

JG: I don't even recall the name.

MG: Did you think that OEO was going to pass in 1967?

JG: I don't think I ever really focused on it that way. We knew both Title I and OEO were in trouble, and we were fighting like hell for them. But I never really had much of a sense of where they stood other than those periodic briefings that the legislative guys used to give at the White House, where they stood and so forth. But I never really had a very good sense other than we had problems.

MG: Let me ask you about Ted Berry, the director of the CAP. Did you ever have a chance to assess his abilities as deputy director of Community Action?

JG: No, no. I very seldom met with him. Almost all of my work was with Shriver and Harding and the director of Head Start, whose name I just lost.

MG: [Julius B.] Richmond? Of course, English I guess came after him.

JG: Well, Joe English some on neighborhood health centers. Sugarman.

MG: Jule Sugarman?

JG: Yes.

MG: Anything on the President's attitude toward Head Start?

JG: Nothing I ever saw other than a very positive attitude there. [He was] very responsive when a presidential task force recommended follow-through on it to make sure that the gains of those early years were not lost immediately when they were thrown into a big classroom environment again and the parents were dropped out of the program and so forth. Everything on the educational side my sense was [of] really unequivocal support, both in a budgetary and a program sense. You have to remember that most of these issues would not surface through us, because we were basically worrying about new programs and legislation. The straight budgetary issues were going up through the Budget Bureau and directly from Charlie Schultze to the President. The only parts of that were the new program, new direction parts, where we would build into his budget the stuff that we needed for the programs coming through our office.

MG: Was OEO underfunded?

JG: Oh, sure. But this country has never been able to afford it, the full funding of it. The thing that I always found troublesome was

that we were learning then, and have seen more clearly since then, the limits on our ability to effectively tax ourselves to meet the needs of the less fortunate in our society. It wasn't so much whether the President was willing to put enough in there, but how far was the public willing to go in terms of taxing itself to meet the needs of the minority. The answer is that some direction but not too far. It's very easy to get support for clean air. It's much tougher to get support for black juvenile delinquents.

MG: Do you recall the Child Development Group in Mississippi, the Head Start program there? Two questions here: one, do you recall any pressure on the White House from Senator [John] Stennis?

JG: No. There might have been, but that wouldn't have come through me. That would have come through Larry O'Brien or Barefoot Sanders or directly to the President. Maybe McPherson, who used to deal with Stennis a lot. I got it the other way when the group came to the White House, basically asking for restoration of Head Start funds.

MG: Did you follow up on that?

JG: Well, yes. I worked a lot with them: one, trying to find out what the status was and trying to see what we could do. As I recall, we were able to find some help for them. Not a total answer, because we had had a lot of trouble with the budget.

MG: One of the officials in Head Start seems to have remembered a call from the White House asking for refunding or restoration of funding. Was that your call? Does that fit into the context of what you were just talking about?

JG: It could have been. You know, in terms of the pernicious kind of call that one hears about coming from the White House, "do this, do that," that would not have been the case. Saying, "Hey, I've listened to this, have worked through it with the guys in the Budget Bureau, and I'd like to sit down and find a way to address this problem, or you convince me as to why we shouldn't." Now that happened a lot.

MG: Do you recall doing that in the case of the Child Development Group?

JG: In terms of the Mississippi problem, no question. It did happen--I can't remember now who was involved--and at about the same time [as] the Job Corps problem, which was hitting us from a lot of different directions.

MG: Speaking of Job Corps, are you familiar with the problem with Wayne Morse and the Job Corps camp, Fort Benoit I guess was the name of it, that was closed down and earned the opposition of Wayne Morse to every OEO program after that?

JG: I don't recall it right now.

MG: Do you think that OEO in general was not sensitive enough to the imperatives of politics in terms of who would get grants and who wouldn't, and which programs would be closed down and which ones wouldn't?

JG: I don't think so. I think in fact what happened there was we lost money late in the year. As I recall, almost three-quarters of the year had elapsed when the budget was finally passed. They cut it and a 10 per cent reduction then was like a 40 per cent reduction,

because they had been funding on a continuing resolution, which was a maintenance of effort. It was awful. Particularly, as I recall, the line item for Job Corps was cut. You could either throw a few kids or maybe half of the kids out of every place, or you could cut some of them off. They finally decided to do the latter, and it was a pathetic thing. I don't have any reason to believe that they didn't do it in a very thoughtful way. But it wasn't because they ought to be cut, it was just because out of a hundred they were the twenty least deserving. Well, that's going to cause you a lot of problems. It was a terrible thing. I remember those kids coming in, a bunch of them from upstate New York, and it made you sick to think they were being thrown back out on the streets of New York City, and they had really finally come to grips with themselves.

But I don't have any reason to think that they blew it substantively or politically. I think the fact is it was tough, and they got burned because they had to make the decision. That's the nice thing about the Congress. They can just cut the budget and then say to the administering agency, "You figure out where you're going to take it."

MG: Let me ask you about New York. Did this pose any special patronage disputes? You had Robert Kennedy, Adam Clayton Powell, [Robert] Wagner and then Lindsay. How did you deal with this array of political competitors?

JG: Well, you know, there were formulas in large measure that took care of how much was going to various different places. The only battle I ever recall getting into on that was with John Lindsay over the allocation of manpower funds. He was just trying to get more. He didn't get them, but he sure took us to task in the papers.

MG: Adam Clayton Powell, was there any way the White House could gain his support?

JG: In what sense?

MG: Well, in the sense of getting him to go along with the administration's proposals in the committee. I gather he was constantly either flying off to Europe or unwilling to push the program forward in his committee.

JG: I don't know.

MG: No indication--?

JG: Try Larry O'Brien.

MG: Okay.

JG: You know, Larry is certainly the one who ought to have a fairly good understanding of the Shriver-Kennedy questions and ones like this.

MG: In 1967 LBJ and Shriver visited the Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia. Do you have any recollections of that?

JG: Sure. We had pushed that a lot. Leon Sullivan, who ran it, had really done a rather remarkable job. I think it was earlier on when I asked OEO to give me some facts about some of the better programs that they were supporting, that was one of the ones they came in with. We did a lot of work checking it out, checking Leon

Sullivan out. It wasn't clear to me whether his concept was transferable because of the strength of his personality. He was training kids and he was getting them jobs because he was a very tough, able guy. I remember at one point the Mayor was very nervous that someday Leon Sullivan would declare his candidacy for mayor. But he was very powerful and he was able to go to private industry and say, "I want 5 per cent of your jobs for my people." My recollection is that he was very successful at it.

So anyway, that recommendation I am sure came through Califano. We put Leon Sullivan on a task force on education. He was quite a guy. I don't think the program, which as you probably know was spread across the country by OEO and Labor, was nearly as successful elsewhere as it was in Philadelphia.

MG: Could you generalize from that to say that it depended in large measure on who was running the program at a particular installation?

JG: Oh, in some cases, but I think that's almost true of anything. It's how good the people are. There are very few things that run themselves.

MG: Do you think OEO helped avert riots, violence?

JG: No.

MG: You know, in the files there are memos recounting how this OEO-Community Action employee or that one would work with the police or try to cool things down.

JG: Oh, there may have been instances. For some it may have been a release; it may have given them a feeling of participating. But

I think in terms of the problems that we saw, particularly the aftermath of the [Martin Luther] King assassination, is that opportunity itself was creating the problem. I remember being struck by the visit to Detroit during the time of all the riots, and reflecting later on that the reason Detroit blew may well have been that there were more chances for minorities there than in almost any big city at that time. Therefore those who were left behind saw it; they saw that they could have it. They could be doctors or lawyers or judges or teachers. They could, but in many cases opportunities that for one reason or another they couldn't take advantage of, or long jail records, they were left behind. They're the ones who blew that city apart. I think if they had not, if blacks and minorities generally had been kept down in Detroit it might never have exploded. If that theory is correct, then one would have to say that programs like OEO are more likely to spark than to stop unrest.

MG: Let me ask you about the food assistance program. Apparently there were ten, maybe twelve occasions in which the White House staff and Secretary [Orville] Freeman tried to get the President to liberalize some of the requirements for food stamps, et cetera, and he refused to do so. Do you have any observations on this? What happened? Why he wouldn't [liberalize them]?

JG: Yes, it's interesting. Somebody just interviewed me at length who's working on a thesis in this area. I was deeply involved in that, as you know, and pushed very hard for greater funding. I can only

speculate as to why because he never really said, certainly not to anybody involved in that process to my knowledge, not to the cabinet officers involved or the budget director, to Joe, to anyone. I think there were a lot of factors: first, he basically didn't like welfare-type program. He was very tough on the welfare budget. He didn't like it. And it wasn't a question of whether there were people who needed help. He just thought that opportunity was the way to deal with problems, not handouts, so that I think we were up against the wall to start with. He just didn't like that way of dealing with problems.

Secondly, he was making some very tough choices on the budget, and if he had to pour money out, this was not a high priority for him, if he was going to break the line. There were lots of things. Everybody was pushing for more money in those days. As I recall, the total amount available for new initiatives in 1967 was something like five hundred million dollars. Well, for a country of this size that's peanuts. We were asking for more than that for the food programs at one point in time. As I recall, he was also not satisfied that the program was well administered, that it was really going to those who needed it. It was interesting to me--I think it was our last attempt to turn him around--he asked Freeman and Charlie Zwick a bunch of question about the administration of the program that they couldn't answer. I don't know whether he had a feeling that it was the commune-type crowd who were getting the food stamps, or what. But they certainly didn't satisfy him

that there was a very tight administration out there that insured that the stamps only went to people who really needed them and who couldn't make it on their own.

MG: Was this the line of his questioning?

JG: Oh, yes.

MG: Who would get the stamps and how would you--?

JG: And how do you make sure that they really need it, those kinds of things. Well, it was a state-administered program and basically the same welfare mechanism that he didn't like anyway.

MG: How much of it do you think was his commitment to Congress to cut taxes?

JG: As I said before, I think some of it had to do with the very difficult times economically. He was making some very tough calls about the economy in those days.

MG: Do you think that BOB was sufficiently supportive of OEO?

JG: No question.

MG: Really?

JG: Tough, critical, but in terms of supporting what they were after, very much so. [They were] much more critical of the other departments and agencies, in terms of the objectives. I mean, they were fairly harsh in saying, "This isn't administered well," or something like that, but very supportive in terms of trying to find ways to do it well. You have to be awfully careful because of the number of things that were going on there. One tends, looking back, to assume the War on Poverty was the Community Action Program.

That was one part of it that nobody ever understood very well, and which to me is very understandable. I didn't understand it very well, because they weren't doing just one thing; they were doing everything. In many ways the thing they were most effective at was hiring people and giving them something to do.

MG: Did you see it as possibly providing an apprenticeship for urban political leaders, particularly black leaders?

JG: I'm sure a lot of people did and that was also a source of criticism, that all CAP was doing was raising holy hell in every community around the country. There's no question that was true to a large degree; they were giving people resources and they were using those resources in a political way.

MG: Do you think OEO had a problem controlling or overseeing or monitoring the programs that it delegated?

JG: You mean Head Start after it got to [HEW]?

MG: Yes, and Neighborhood Youth Corps.

JG: My guess is they didn't.

MG: That they were able to monitor them or that they didn't monitor them at all?

JG: They did not at all. Remember, that occurred--as I recall the first delegation occurred in 1968.

MG: Well, NYC was always under the Labor Department.

JG: Yes, but there the big choices were where the funds went, for whom and by what formula. The administering agency didn't make much difference. But the fact is, when programs were shifted, they for

all practical purposes lost control. We had hoped the delegation would enable them to exercise leverage.

MG: John Gardner on one occasion tried to take VISTA out of OEO. Do you recall that?

JG: Oh, yes. That was just before he left. Yes, I'll never forget that meeting. The last thing that John came to see the President about was a major effort to encourage volunteerism in America, and VISTA was part of that. He wanted an additional thirteen million in the HEW budget to create a new umbrella agency.

MG: Who was at the meeting, do you know?

JG: Yes, it was a very emotional meeting. It was the only thing that he fought for in the HEW budget, and as a result Califano and I forget whether it was Zwick or Schultze and I basically had to fight for the rest of his budget, particularly the scholarship funds that were under attack. But John focused all of his attention that year on volunteerism. I think it was Zwick and Califano. I'm sure there was somebody from the Council of Economic Advisers, probably Larry Levinson.

MG: What was the President's reaction, do you recall?

JG: The President was not there. I can't remember exactly what John wanted but I think he wanted the thirteen million restored. He had gone through the Budget Bureau, lost the thirteen million, wanted it restored, and Joe went with him over everybody else's objections, particularly as I recall, Charlie Schultze and me, who felt that it was extremely important to target volunteer

activities. That things like the Urban Coalition had never really worked except where they picked one objective, and by way of contrast the National Alliance of Businessmen had been very effective in the early days, because they were going after just one thing. They weren't trying to deal with housing and education and health and everything; they were trying to get jobs. We thought that the same thing should be done for volunteerism. I think Joe, sensing a great deal of emotion, went along with John and felt that he ought to have that as he finished his tour in government. It was not a big number item, and I have a feeling it didn't go to the President. Joe just took Charlie--

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JG: I doubt seriously if that issue ever went back to the President.

MG: Well, with regard to VISTA though, how the effort was not successful to take VISTA out of OEO and put it in HEW.

JG: You may know better than I. I think that was in the budget that went up to the Congress in January of 1968. I may be wrong. Isn't that right? Isn't that about when John left?

MG: I think so.

JG: I think what Joe did was to leave the funds in there, reserving for future discussion precisely how all of the volunteer efforts would be coordinated, but resolving the budget issue in favor of Gardner, so giving him the money to do it. I have a feeling the rest of it got sorted out in the legislative process. John left the government. HEW didn't push it very hard, and nothing happened.

MG: I see.

Lyndon Johnson was considered to have a man in each department or agency, someone that was especially loyal to him that he knew he could depend on, beneath the level of the secretary, shall we say. Was there anyone on OEO in particular that was recognized as a Johnson man?

JG: I guess I never regarded those rumors as being accurate, because I never knew of any of them in any place. There were some people who had worked on the campaign; there were people who had been advance men who were in kind of lower-level jobs around the government. But I didn't know of such a person in any department or agency. If I think of the agencies that I worked most closely with--Labor, HEW, Justice--I don't know who the person is. Maybe you can tell me. I can't identify the one in HEW any more than I can in OEO. Bert Harding was not one of the original group--and you know, he was a very loyal civil servant--but I never regarded him as being just loyal to one man.

MG: How about Bill Crook?

JG: Was Crook with VISTA?

MG: Yes.

JG: Okay. I remember that name now. I met him. It's interesting to me that where he may have had a lot of relationships in the White House, neither Joe nor I ever worked through him.

MG: I think he was mainly a protege of Bill Moyers. He had known Moyers I think.

JG: There may have been other links to the White House than ours, but I was probably in two meetings with him over the three-year period, I think.

MG: Do you think that the departure of Moyers and ascendency of Joe Califano made any difference in OEO? In other words, did the change in White House staffing have any impact on OEO?

JG: Any impact on the staffing?

MG: No, on either the operation of the program or the direction of the program, or the staffing of the program.

JG: I'm sure it did, but there's absolutely no way for me to do anything but speculate. I say that mainly because I think that Joe and Bill were very different kinds of people, [had] different kinds of relationships with the President. I'm certain that if Moyers had stayed in the domestic policy role he was in originally that things would have been different, but I don't know how. My guess is that attention would have been more focused rather than the attempt that Joe made to deal with every problem. I mean, he just drove very hard to make sure that there was nothing overlooked in terms of major social needs in the country, so that an awful lot of programs were started. Whereas if you look at the way Moyers had approached it in 1964, it was much more concentrated on a few major things. So my guess is things would have been different, but I don't know how.

MG: Do you recall how Harding was selected as director?

JG: No. My only recollection there--and I don't even know whether he was selected before I got to the White House or not, but I'm fairly certain that it was because of a felt need for a strong administration in the agency. It kind of relates to your question earlier about Shriver. That was not his strength, in terms of in-house administration, and I think that's why Bert was brought in.

MG: Do you recall the situation in Syracuse, New York with the Community Action Program there that was in effect placed in receivership or trusteeship? It was in July, 1967.

JG: No. I remember the President's speech in Syracuse about starting the multi-service centers, but I don't remember the receivership.

MG: Were the multi-service centers successfully established?

JG: I doubt it. I sense from the smile on your face that you've heard some of the background.

MG: Well, go ahead. Maybe I should rephrase it by asking you to discuss how the need arose and how the President went about implementing this.

JG: Well, it was very tough. The need was apparent for some time of trying to make services accessible to the people. The more we got into the problems of the poor, particularly the urban poor, the more apparent it became how difficult it was for them to travel, also for the elderly, and that federal agencies were putting their offices all over, a lot in cities, most of them in downtown locations, not near where the people lived. The President was making a speech about urban America and wanted some ideas in terms of things that

he ought to say and new directions he ought to propose and that was one of them. I think that may have been the night where he also considered Denticare, which Wilbur Cohen suggested to him. Fortunately he called us and Charlie Schultze and found out how many billions it would have cost to do it.

MG: Do you recall the genesis of the idea for the multi-service center?

JG: We had been working on it, trying to get some established. I have a feeling the idea was coming out of the Budget Bureau, I'm not sure of that. They were pushing to concentrate and coordinate delivery of services. It was kind of a big thing in those days, to figure out how the hell you did it. My guess is that it was Larry Levinson who put in the President's speech, "We're going to establish twelve centers." So the President announced it.

We convened a meeting in Califano's office with the secretaries of HUD, Labor, HEW and the Director of OEO--I think it was those four--and basically gave them a memorandum to work it out with Budget Bureau participation, maybe somebody from the CEA, and to come back with recommendations on how to implement it. But [the plan was] for them to work together and figure out how to organize them and how to fund them. I received word about three months later that the task, which had been assigned to the under secretaries and the deputy director of OEO, was hopelessly stalled and that what they had agreed that day was that they were each going to have their multi-service center. HUD was going to have so many and Labor was going to have so many, and the whole purpose seemed

to have been defeated. Joe called them all and asked them to all come into the White House at the cabinet level, I think without the under secretaries, to discuss it. I think we got it back on track. But I'm not sure whether those centers were even established before we left or not.

MG: Was it primarily an issue of agency identification, department identification, for example, with Labor wanting to have "Department of Labor" on the door and this sort of thing?

JG: It was another example of how difficult it is to get the agencies to work together. I think there were differences as to who paid the bills, what was in them, where they were to be located, what they were to do, and they finally just threw their hands up and said, "Well, we'll each do ours." It was really a kind of pathetic display. But I think it tells you something about the nature of the government that we have. Those departments are very independent and they don't do an awful lot to help one another.

MG: My impression is that the President really encouraged this sort of independence in general, however, that he seemed to recognize a cabinet member's right to run his department, and that he didn't like to interfere with this. Can you comment on that?

JG: That doesn't sound an awful lot like the President I worked for. I think Lyndon Johnson felt--well, I'm sure that theoretically he had some of those feelings, but he also really tried very hard to run the federal government, the executive branch, and to get into far more detail than any president than I know of, in terms of

exercising leadership from the White House. Others have tried to do it in very different ways, but I mean I think he was trying to influence it in a positive way to go his direction. I'm sure if you asked him, "Should cabinet officers have a lot of discretion to carry out their mandates?" he would say, "Of course." But in practice he really was deeply involved in an awful lot of detail about what was going on in the federal government and really expected them to do it his way.

MG: I see. Well, in the particular case you were discussing, there was an indication that the Justice Department, another department, was called in to sort of adjudicate among the differing departments. Do you recall that at all?

JG: We used them for a lot of things, but I don't think that one. No question that the Budget Bureau was in and very often the President would use Califano for those purposes.

MG: Do you remember James Farmer's literacy project? OEO refused to fund it. It was something that was proposed in the summer of 1966 I believe.

JG: [No].

MG: Okay. Now, did Lyndon Johnson rely on his own source of investigations on the War on Poverty? I know at one point in 1965 it was suggested that under Bill Moyers political aides would go out and look in on OEO projects around the country. I think he used you and other staff members to look into the problems of riots in the

cities. Did he, to your knowledge, rely on this informal mechanism with regard to OEO?

JG: Not to my knowledge. We were asking for a lot of things from them directly and through the Budget Bureau, but I don't know of any special efforts that he was making to examine it independently.

MG: A question on the Job Corps: did the President or the White House in general ever try to get Job Corps centers established in the Deep South?

JG: I don't remember, but I'm kind of surprised by the question. Because if you'd asked me were there any, I would have said I would expect so, but I don't know. I thought they were fairly well dispersed all over the country. I may be wrong.

MG: Did you view the Job Corps as a disappointment?

JG: No. It was very disappointing to see the funds cut off and I did conclude that in terms of a national effort it was much more expensive than going through private industry. [I thought] that we were far better off to pay private industry a lot of money per person to get them to train people for real jobs than we were to try to do it ourselves. So while I was very supportive of it and thought it essential for some people, in terms of the major national initiative I thought it was just too expensive and the country couldn't afford it. Much like job creation, it takes too long, it's too expensive, and you have to find more efficient ways to do it.

MG: Did President Johnson object to the community organizing work that VISTA volunteers did?

JG: Not that I know of.

MG: Were you aware that the volunteers were doing this sort of work, as opposed to, shall we say, casework?

JG: I don't think I was conscious of it at the time.

MG: Well, this is sort of a might-have-been. If you had been, would this have caused a problem? I mean, did you see this as an integral part of the program or something that was needed, sort of serve as political agents for the poor, more or less.

JG: Well, doing what kind of work?

MG: Well, for example, organizational work for meetings, organizing neighborhood residents around, say, issues, tenant issues, things like that? Encouraging neighborhood participation in, say, community action elections, things like that?

JG: Well, none of it would have surprised me. It was a fairly broad-based effort to encourage the poor and help them on a voluntary basis do things for themselves. You know, you're just describing some ways in which one can do that, and you can help yourself through becoming better organized to try and fight problems in your area, and to make yourself heard by participating in more things. So it doesn't really surprise me; it's quite consistent. It's been so long since I focused on VISTA, I didn't really think of those kinds of activities.

MG: There was pressure in the late sixties to hire more indigenous VISTA volunteers rather than say white middle-class VISTAs who would go back out to suburbia, but rather VISTAs who came from the

area involved. Did this sort of proposal reach the White House and was it considered?

JG: Not that I know of. My guess is those kinds of proposals would be addressed more at the agency level than at the White House.

MG: On Community Action, during this period that you were in the White House, of course, [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was beginning to write his observations about Community Action and point to the fact that no one, even at its inception, knew what it was supposed to be or supposed to do and that there was some misinterpretation. Was there ever during the time you were in the White House an occasion where, say, the key advisers sat down and decided what Community Action should be, even if it meant that it should be vague and flexible?

JG: Not at the White House level. There were lots of discussions--that is, not amongst all of the different advisers at the White House level. There were lots of those conversations at the Califano level, dealing basically between Joe and Larry and me and the agency, and many more in terms of dealing with the Budget Bureau, but I don't think there was ever much of an attempt to change the focus. I think in terms of the Budget Bureau and Califano's office, the feeling was that Community Action was designed to allow the neighborhood people to decide for themselves what their problems were and how they could most effectively address them. That could mean anything from nursing care for the elderly to cleaning out the sewers, and indeed, it did. There were rat control programs and job-type programs and education-type programs,

literally all over the lot. Some were political action-type programs, some with youth, some with criminals. They were really doing all kinds of things, and some of them were trying to do everything. I don't remember any major movement to change that.

MG: But it was discussed you say?

JG: Oh, sure.

MG: Then presumably those of you who discussed it were satisfied with at least the focus of the program?

JG: Yes. I think there was concern about keeping track of it and how you could monitor a program that was so broad, and the fact that it was creating enormous political problems and really jeopardizing the other programs that were structured and more successful. I think a lot of us felt that if you broke out the individual things that Community Action agencies did, as nursing programs or educational programs or training programs or environmental programs, everybody would say, "Geez, that's terrific." The minute you called it a Community Action Program they'd say, "Oh, that again." But no, I think there was a recognition of political difficulty, of how long you could kind of support that undefined a program. But that it was worth trying. And increasingly they just put more and more constraints on it, culminating in the Edith Green [business].

MG: One result of this was to require more and more reporting from the agency, and it almost seems that by 1968 OEO was doing little more than responding to all of these investigations and reports and queries from congressional committees. Was this a problem? Did this impair the work of the agency?

JG: Oh, sure it did. No doubt. But I think the important point to remember that I've stated several times is that the important contribution of OEO had already been made, and it had very little to do with the programs themselves. OEO played a major role in redirecting the government programs. Through example, when I got there pre-school education was in disfavor in HEW; the federal government should not be supporting that. Within a couple of years pre-school education was the darling. The Office of Education was supporting it, thought it was a good thing, thought that indeed the age level ought to be reduced. So that the example and the focus--the example of pre-school education, the focus on poor kids--had an enormous impact on what was happening in education, and this was true across the board. I don't know. I guess it might have been possible to do it differently and to have had less difficulty, but I doubt it. I think when you start focusing a lot of attention on the poor, who don't really have a very big voice, where there are likely to be some problems, that you're going to have a lot of difficulties. OEO is not the only example of this, but it is, I think, the most successful attempt in terms of redirecting the attention of government that we've seen in this century.

MG: How do you explain Harding's failure to receive Senate confirmation in 1968?

JG: I can't even remember what happened, to be honest with you. He did not receive confirmation as director of OEO?

MG: Right. I gather at first it was the problem with Morse and Senator [Harry] Byrd with the TWO [The Woodlawn Organization] hearings.

JG: I thought ultimately though he got confirmed.

MG: Well, not while President Johnson was in the White House, I don't believe. He was always acting [director], wasn't he?

JG: I may be wrong, but I recall calling to congratulate him.

MG: I'll check my [notes].

JG: Now maybe that was when he was named acting but I doubt it. Anyway, if he wasn't confirmed I can't explain it.

MG: I have a note that after March 31, 1968 the President was advised by Speaker [John] McCormack and the Majority Leader [Mike Mansfield] that he might kill one of the domestic programs if he made any public statement in support of it, and this was an indication of how as a lame duck he was powerless or certainly had less power. Do you recall this? Did it happen?

JG: I don't know whether it happened. It was certainly reported to have happened even in the White House. As I recall, it was in the Washington Post, and I believe it was during the summer, maybe even as late as September when that statement was made. I think the context was an educational bill, maybe Title I. But I never heard the President ever say anything, and I'm sure no one would have raised it directly with him on the White House staff.

MG: Do you recall the defeat of the rat exterminating bill, 1967?

JG: Impossible.

MG: Well, the initial [bill], I think the House voted it down.

JG: No, I don't remember that. I remember putting it together. It still exists, you know.

I'll tell you one interesting story. I went back to help Califano get organized when he went in as secretary of HEW, and a massive amount of mail comes into that department. We were trying to get control over the paper flow, both from within and from without, and thought we had set up a pretty good system. One of the things that slipped through in the early days was a letter drafted somewhere in the bowels of that organization to one of the better mayors in the United States, who had written the Secretary saying, "I've just been told that HEW will not continue funding of the rat extermination program in"--whatever the city was--"because we've been too successful, and I'm enclosing a copy of this incredible letter that I've received from HEW." And a letter went back from Joe that somehow got through him saying, "Dear Mr. Mayor, I congratulate you on the wonderful rat extermination program you've run for that city." It was absolutely awful. Anyway, the way we found out about it was that the mayor called Joe directly and said, "I just want you to understand what's happening in your department." It was incredible. But that program is still alive and well. But I didn't remember that we had lost it in the first go-around.

MG: Also in 1967 the tighter controls on participation requirements, et cetera, do you think that that was essentially to keep southern Democrats on board?

JG: No, I don't think so. I think it was an attempt to deal with the increasing criticism that the program was receiving across the board. [I think] there were just too many stories appearing in the press about problems: people who shouldn't be receiving money or one Community Action employee getting into some kind of trouble and supporting the wrong kind of drug program. I think in response there was an awful lot of political trouble, and the fact is that there was no lobby there for the poor, and there still isn't in Washington. So a lot of concessions had to be made.

MG: Anything else on the War on Poverty that we haven't covered? Any meetings that you recall or discussions with the President?

JG: I don't think so. I think we've pretty well covered everything. You know, the most important meetings--and I think the reason why you were not finding much in the way of documentation--were where different slices of the pie were taken. We very seldom looked at programs as the poverty program. We looked at manpower programs where there was a poverty component, and we looked at education, and we looked at health care, and we looked at children and youth, and we did lots of slices. But when the President addressed things like education and youth and aged, he didn't do so in the context of OEO, and I think that's why you don't find it there. But if you look through every legislative program, every presentation of the program for the year prior to the State of the Union Message, you will find the poverty component in there and the poverty piece of the budget was in there. But we never addressed

it with him to my recollection, or with anybody, as just OEO. I have a feeling there was one OEO message, one War on Poverty message, but normally we dealt with it the other way.

MG: I think you worked with urban and rural poverty message in 1967.

JG: Yes, we did one, but even that one was a different cut at it.

MG: Well, I certainly do appreciate your time.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview V]

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