INTERVIEWEE: JOHN GARDNER (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

December 20, 1971

M: This is an interview with Dr. John W. Gardner. I am in his office in Washington, D.C. at Common Cause, which is 2100 M Street, Northwest. The time is 2:45 in the afternoon, the date is December 20, 1971, and my name is David McComb.

First of all I need to ask you something about your background and how you got into government work and so forth. And we might as well start from the beginning. Where did you get your education, where were you born, and when?

G: Well, I hate to use up time on the tape with material that is amply available elsewhere. But I'll give you a very quick sketch of it. I was born in California, went to Stanford University, took my A.B., M.A. and Ph.D. in psychology, Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley.

M: You were a swimmer, too.

G: Yes, a swimmer at Stanford. I taught psychology at Connecticut College and Mount Holyoke College. And then after Pearl Harbor I spent almost a year in work with the Federal Communications Commission. And then I went into the Marine Corps, into OSS--I was assigned to OSS--went overseas to the European Theatre. After I came back I went with Carnegie Corporation and spent nineteen years in the foundation.

M: Why did you switch from teaching to the foundation?

G: I pretty well decided during the war years that I didn't want to return to the academic world, that I wanted to try something else.

I'm a born reader and writer, I don't think that I am a born teacher, and I probably would have gone back if someone had offered me a research job, but I was not wild about a teaching career, and didn't return to it.

M: Fine. Then you were with Carnegie for quite awhile, weren't you?

G: Nineteen years.

M: Until 1965.

G: Yes.

M: All right somewhere in here you meet Lyndon Johnson. When was that?

G: Well, I would guess that it was in perhaps the late '50's or early '60's. He was interested in the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii and its possibility as a base for Pacific basin studies--you know, Asian, American and Pacific Islands studies--and he asked a group of us to advise him on that and I came down and joined with the group and met him for the first time.

M: This is when he was Senate Majority Leader?

G: He was Senate Majority Leader.

M: What did you think about him at that point?

G: Well, just a first impression of a very alert, rather commanding figure, very pleasant, very much in charge, quick mind. Then I met him the second time when we were both getting honorary doctor's degrees at Brown University. That could have been perhaps--well, I guess that was the late '50's too. And it was very odd that we were the same height and roughly the same build, and a number of people there mistook me for the senator. And a good deal of home movie tape was wasted on me when they thought they were taking the Senator Majority Leader. The Mayor of Providence came up and

squeezed my hand in a death grip and said, "Senator, I'm so happy to see you and meet you," and so forth. But that's the first time that Mrs. Gardner met Lady Bird, and she took to her very much, a very warm relationship.

And then I didn't see him until I began to consult with him on the White House Conference and so forth.

M: All right. Some place in here you were involved in the White House Fellows Program.

G: That's right.

M: Didn't you write a memo to that effect, or a suggestion?

G: I wrote a memo in 1957 and proposed a hundred Fellows, and proposed that it be financed by a foundation. And no foundation was interested. Then in 1964, I guess it was, I was lunching with Eric Goldman at the Hay-Adams Hotel and he said, "The President is deeply concerned that young people aren't interested in politics anymore. And he wishes that there could be some way of getting them interested." "Well," I said, "I've got a memo yellowing in the files and I'll send it down to you," so I sent him the memo and with astonishing speed Lyndon Johnson just took hold of it. Apparently both he and Lady Bird read the memo and just pressed the buttons and started the Program. It's astonishing how quickly they acted.

M: Did the Carnegie Foundation provide some seed money for that?

G: They provided some money, yes, but it was for the educational side of the program--the lectures and seminars, and that kind of thing.

M: Did Johnson ever pick up the phone and call you about that or consult with you about it?

G: No. But when we announced the program, I saw him again and he was

very cordial and Mrs. Johnson was very cordial, and they clearly associated me very much with the program. Then I was on the commission that developed the plan. And I'm still fairly close to a great many of those young people.

M: Did it work out to your satisfaction?

G: Oh yes, very much so.

M: Good. You were involved in some task forces too in this period of time?

G: Yes, starting clear back in 1947, after the war, I began doing a lot of consulting for government--the Department of Defense, AID, Office of Education, White House, State Department.

M: These all on educational matters?

G: Well, no, education, social science, human behavior. I was on the scientific advisory board of the Air Force; I was chairman of President Kennedy's Commission on International Education and Cultural Affairs, and I was a member of President Kennedy's task force on education. And then when President Johnson came to the White House he asked me to chair his task force.

M: This is '64?

G: '64, yes. Almost immediately. And that's really where our association began.

M: How were you appointed to this? Did they write you a letter, did they call you in to Washington, did Johnson ask to see you, or how was this set up?

G: I haven't the faintest recollection. I would guess that somebody in the White House called me. I didn't see the President until later, and when I saw him, I think it was with the whole task force.

M: Did the President ever give you a charge of what he wanted?

G: Oh yes.

M: Can you recall any of that?

G: Well, I recall the most important part of it was the thing that I heard him say many times later to other groups after I had become Secretary, and that was that he wanted our ideas, he wanted our best thinking, he wanted our most innovative thinking. And he wanted us to forget politics. He said, "I don't need advice on that, and I don't want you to worry about it. I want your thinking. I'll figure out whether it's feasible. I'll figure out how to do it."

M: Did that make sense?

G: Oh yes, absolutely. Task forces spend a lot of time being amateur politicians and saying, "This isn't feasible, we won't recommend it," and this is ridiculous. They don't know what's feasible. You know, it's like the doctor. It's as though the doctor were to say, "Well, you won't like it if I tell you that you need penicillin so I won't tell you!" Your adviser ought to tell you what you need. So I thought it was very intelligent and undefensive, and open and positive approach to the thing. In fact that approach characterized his whole early years, as you know. All signals were go, and full speed ahead, and all ideas were wanted, and that was characteristic.

M: Since you have served on some of these task forces, are they a useful instrument of government? Are they a good way of getting ideas in at a top level?

G: They can be, they can be. There's nothing in a task force that guarantees its effectiveness or ineffectiveness. It is a procedure

that can be used with enormous skill or it can be wasted. It starts out with the people you put on the task force, the chairman, the man who puts the report together. My natural advantage as a task force chairman was that I always put my own report together.

I felt that another extremely crucial part of it was close participation of the people who were going to pick up the report and do something with it. Wilbur Cohen was in very close touch. He was then under secretary. Frank Keppel was head of the U.S. Office of Education and an old friend of mine. Keppel was in every meeting, he knew everything that was going on, he contributed ideas, he took ideas out of the meeting. There was a complete exchange, and there was no rule that said that you had to wait until the report was written before you did anything. So some of those ideas went into the pot immediately. I mean an idea that was talked about in today's meeting might be talked about in HEW the next day. And if they thought it was interesting they might even begin to do something about it. And in the same way they might have inserted some of our most interesting ideas through Frank Keppel, and we regarded every idea on its merits. The fact that Frank Keppel supplied it was just as good as though one of our task force members had supplied it. So that in fact they would hardly have needed the final report. This was in the bloodstream of the department, the final report was useful as a kind of checkpoint to look back over it to see what they hadn't done. It was very valuable when they were drawing up legislation to check back over the things and they'd call me in later and say, "Now, what did you mean by this? We are now framing legislation, and we want to be sure."

First, you have perhaps a dozen people, I've forgotten how many there were, who in themselves are sifters of the best ideas in their fields. And these were men who knew elementary education, secondary education, colleges, junior colleges, vocational education--everything--science and so forth, minority groups.

Second, I suppose that we communicated with as many as fifty other people asking them for in-depth advice as to what we should be dealing with so that all of this came in. And these people, again, were not people chosen at random, but they were people who would be effective sifters of the ideas in a field such as the library field, for example, so that they could put before us the most interesting ideas for the advancement of that field that were available. So that you had finally a kind of a pulling together of a vast number of ideas, sorting them out, sifting priorities, and this untidy but inexcapable business of debating them across the table and trading out differences and so forth, but in effect distilling the best thinking of that moment in history on the subject of education. And I would guess that another comparable task force operating on comparable principles would come out with a fairly similar report.

M: Was there any difference in the operations of the task forces under Kennedy versus Johnson?

G: Yes, the one under President Kennedy was far more under the guidance of the Secretary of HEW, Abraham Ribicoff. It was much more informal. The sessions weren't as full, and I think it was a very small group, as I remember, perhaps four or five people.

M: In other words, Johnson used the task force in a more comprehensive

or broader way?

G: Well, certainly ours was. I don't know all the others, but ours was a fairly formal thing. We had an absolutely first-class staff director and a very good assistant, and we had the money we needed, and we had full meetings with lots of debate, circulated drafts, and so forth.

M: After the completion of the task force report, you were still consulted?

G: Oh yes.

M: In other words you were still around to follow through on some of the ideas.

G: That's right. But the essence of follow-through is what I told you earlier about the relationship with the people actually involved. There's nothing more artificial than trying to take the rich interchange that goes on in a task force, with all of the debate and the compromises and the varying levels of intensity of a recommendation, trying to distill it on paper, and then send it through the mail or the message service to the man who has the dreadful task of carrying it out, when he's in the same town and you could bring him into the meetings, and let him listen, and be a part of it!

M: Was this Elementary and Secondary Education Act of '65 sort of an example of the follow-through?

G: Oh yes, absolutely.

M: Your task force attacked this idea, and the problem of helping elementary and secondary education and the religious question involved, and then this act came out and resolved a lot of that. Now there is an inter-relationship then, between your task force and the final act.

G: Oh yes, very intimate, very intimate relationship. But again a relationship that came out of teamwork. Because, you see, the formula--the final thing that broke the log jam--really came more out of Frank Keppel and perhaps Wayne Morse than it did out of the task force. They threw the idea into the task force.

You see, in 1961, I guess it was, when the Kennedy task force was operating, we were still in that period when you couldn't get federal aid to education and every time you tried, it broke up not only on the obvious parliamentary difficulties of the church-state question and the minorities question, but the question of equalization of funds. You would discover instantly that some states were in the gravest need of more help than they would normally get from their population. And you would try to think through some equalization formula whereby states would get so much but some states would get more because they just couldn't--Mississippi shows more tax effort with respect to education than most other states and yet it's so poor that it doesn't get enough money to educate its children.

Now in that time, you see, 1961, we still hadn't gotten over the hump of how you help the poor states. Frank Keppel and I were very much interested in this kind of equalization arrangement--putting the money where it was most desperately needed, into the poorest states. And Secretary Ribicoff said, "Well now, I'll just have to tell you that as former governor of Connecticut it bothers me to think that the very states, which have been coming into my state of Connecticut and persuading my factories to move south to get the cheap labor supply, will get Connecticut money to follow those factories to educate their children." I don't know if he even

believed it himself, but he was trying to give me a typical governor's response to this attitude of money from his state going to a poorer state.

Well we were stuck on this idea, which incidentally Senator Taft had pressed for years. You know, Senator Taft was supposed to be the great conservative, but he had some very, very forward looking ideas and one of them was just this, that we should pump some federal money into the poorer states for education.

We broke through that in '64 when we stopped talking about richer states and poorer states and began talking about poorer districts. And every state has poor districts. So it dissolved that whole sense of the state feeling that its money was going somewhere else it dissolved this whole geographical paralysis. And then people said, "Why of course, pump money into the poor districts," and we devised a formula that did just that.

M: And this idea is later picked up in legislation?

G: That's right. In fact most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act came out of the task force report.

M: Are there any other high points of that task force report that come to mind?

G: I'd have to review it.

M: Now, while this is going on, you apparently head up a White House Conference on Education. This is mid-1965. Is that connected with the task force in any way, or is this a separate sort of thing?

G: It's a separate activity. This was a day of White House conferences, and the White House conference was useful, I think. It took the best thinking of the day in the sense of finding the people with the most

advanced ideas and give them a platform to talk to a collection of their peers from all over the country. And also established lines of acquaintance between people from various parts of the country under very good auspices. Not only did lots and lots of acquaintances begin there and professional relationships begin there, but there was a very strong identification of education with the Johnson Administration as a result of that conference. Everybody felt that it was the dawn of a new day in education.

M: Do you remember the circumstances of your appointment to head that up?

G: No, I haven't the faintest recollection.

M: Okay. Now it's about this time, too, that you are appointed Secretary of HEW--that July?

G: That was in July 1965. Well, I was actually appointed August 18, 1965.

M: Officially.

G: Yes. I went to work the late part of July.

M: I think it's obvious why you did this, but I ought to ask you the question. Why did he appoint you head of HEW?

G: Well, who knows! I had quite a visible role in the field of education. I was quite widely known. I had done two or three earlier chores for the President, and our relationship was good. The White House Conference on Education came out very well.

I think it was before the White House Conference, actually, that he called me down. Jack Valenti called me and said the President wanted to see me, and I came down. And he spent a couple of hours with me.

M: What did he say to you?

G: Well I've forgotten, but he talked about what he wanted to do in the

field of education and how important it was, and typically talked about a lot of the other problems that he was facing at the time. It's his nature to give you the whole burden of what's on his mind, and I heard a great deal of it.

But he did, in the course of it, ask me had I ever thought of a public career. And I said no, I was pretty much interested in what I was doing. And he probed a bit as to my availability and I didn't close the door. I just said I was pretty much a private sector person.

But, you know, two hours in the life of a President, people came in and out. At one point one of the astronauts' journies had ended, and he picked up the phone and talked to the astronauts and the White House photographers' corps dashed in and took his picture and went out. And our conversation went right on. This was kind of a dramatic experience. He never said what he wanted, never said what his purpose was in calling me down. But it was a very good get-acquainted visit and it was clear he had something in mind, but I didn't know what, and I didn't know until the last day of the White House Conference.

We had the closing session of the conference on the White House lawn in back, a beautiful spot to close a conference. A thousand, two thousand people, I don't know how many but quite a few. A beautiful day and the White House is a marvelous backdrop. You know, everyone's morale was just so high and they were so excited. And the Marine Corps Band there playing, and the President and Lady Bird came out, and they played "Hail to the Chief." I remember Lady Bird came up to the platform. I had been on the platform making

some announcements, she came up first and I spoke to her and introduced her to the first member of the conference that was on the platform. I turned to greet the President and instead of just shaking my hand, he kind of turned me around in a half-circle and leaned over and said, "If I were to offer you a really big job, you wouldn't refuse it would you," laughing a little bit. He loved this kind of drama, you know. And I said, "Well, I'd have to talk to my wife about it," and he laughed at that and went on.

And then after his speech was over and I came down from the platform, Douglass Cater told me that he was going to ask me to do this. And shortly thereafter a messenger came along and said, "The President wants to see you." So it was that day that he really made me the offer.

And it was quite hard to decide because it was a big step for me and I didn't see myself as a public figure <u>at all</u>. Wasn't interested, didn't have any motivations in that direction. I've never regretted it, I must say, it was tremendous learning experience.

M: You took over HEW just about the time they were working on Medicare, as I recall.

G: Just about. I think they'd just barely passed it, or hadn't yet passed it, I've forgotten. But I lived through all the preparatory--we developed the program during my period.

M: Was this one of your major problems in HEW?

G: Oh yes, absolutely. It was an enormously dramatic experience. Here we had this huge, huge program that would affect millions of people, all the Cassandras saying it wouldn't possibly work. Really, literally up until the eve of the day on which it was to begin, commentators

saying, "Tomorrow there will be chaotic lines of people in the hospitals and they will be jammed, and there will be disorder and chaos as this incredible mass of people pour into a system that isn't ready for it."

And it turned out that our preparations had been very good and we handled it with great confidence. The system had been beautifully set up, but the disastrous part of it was that dealing with the payment mechanism without dealing with the delivery system meant that you poured huge amounts of money into a system that couldn't deliver, and you produced an inflation of medical costs and hospital costs that was pretty devastating, and still is.

Now the root of this, of course, is that the medical profession is so stuck in the mud, so committed to its professional self-interests, that it has been unwilling to alter patterns of practice that can no longer deliver the medical care that society now needs. And they systematically blocked most attempts to alter that.

M: How come they didn't block Medicare? Did you deal with the medical profession?

G: Oh yes, we dealt with them very, very extensively, and very fully. Lyndon Johnson, out of his Senate experience I'm sure, was a great believer in consultation. And he told us time and again to sit down with these people and talk it out with them. And we did. And in our first rather dramatic meeting which occurred just about the time I was coming in--it was before I was appointed actually--we met and I told them--this a group from the AMA and other representatives of the profession--that we wanted to consult fully with them, we wanted to keep them fully advised at every stage, we wanted their criticisms,

but that we were going to push ahead. And then we went into the Cabinet Room and the President talked to them very openly, very eloquently, very compellingly. Told them of his own respect for the medical profession, told them what a high position the medical profession held in the affections of the American people, which happens to be precisely true, and then said in effect, "Gentlemen, you cannot in this favored position do anything but work for the public interest. You've got to do it! It's expected of you, and you are equal to it, and I expect it of you, so we're going to listen to you." It was a marvelous combination of openness and saying, in effect, "We've got to move ahead." So it set the stage beautifully for later conversations.

But right down the line, their positions were characterized by the very deepest self-interest. But I have to say that in that respect, they did not differ enormously from most professional groups that we dealt with.

M: When you speak of "they", are you referring to the AMA?

G: The AMA.

M: Are they fairly monolithic in their stances?

G: No, no, no. We happened to hit a time when there were very, very fine men in the key roles, men of real leadership capacity and willingness to carry their less visionary, or let me just say it, more benighted colleagues into the modern world.

M: So the AMA then had various factions in it; from liberal to conservative?

G: Oh yes, very much, absolutely. They have some very, very fine people. They have in the past ten years had two or three very fine men as presidents, men of great civic concern and courage, but they

have also had very near the top men absolutely blind to significant progress in health care.

M: There were some following programs in health, such as Medicaid, the Partnerships for Health Program. Did you again run afoul of the AMA on these programs?

G: Oh yes, we had to deal with them on every issue. But this is standard. Everything we did we had to deal with professional interests groups, and they were far more concerned with their financial stake in legislation than you'd like to think that professional people would be. Really, absolutely, you know. And even to the detriment of the field as a whole. The junior college people were all out to promote junior colleges and the land grant people were out to promote land grant colleges. You know sometimes you wanted to say, "For heaven's sakes, isn't this one country, can't you all take a look at this and think about what's good for the country!"

M: Other than the AMA, were there other pressure groups involved in the health segment of your work?

G: Oh yes, almost every group had its own pressure activities. Pathologists were very, very strong lobbyists for example and not very attractive ones either.

M: In the area of education, we mentioned the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. There were other acts which followed this too. When you think about education and you work in HEW, are there any great triumphs or problems that come to mind?

G: I think establishing the principle of federal aid to education was absolutely crucial and central to everything that we did later and I would put that down as number one. The breaking-through on the

formula for allocation of funds to the districts that needed the most was a critically important breakthrough.

I think one of the most dramatic things about President Johnson's Administration was his establishment of health and education as top priorities. For a President, this just hadn't been done, you know. It's very hard to recapture now, but neither education nor health were thought of as politically profitable areas, politically appealing. The politicians just didn't fasten on those as things that would be of interest. And President Johnson very early, in his University of Michigan speech I think, quite early in '64, early '64 perhaps, said "Education is the number one priority in the country." Well no other President had ever said that before, and it was an electrifying thing for a President to say. And hard to believe. And he then went on in a series of steps which showed he really believed it.

And then of course the reality was that it proved to be a very popular thing in Congress, once we'd broken these log jams. There were a very large number of Congressmen who discovered that they in fact really wanted to be able to go home to their constituents and say, "I voted for health, I voted for education." So that we found ourselves functioning in quite a favorable climate politically, it was not at the end of the line as far as political appeal.

M: Where does Johnson get this interest?

G: I don't know, you'd have to dig into his backgroud.

M: He never said anything to you about this?

G: Oh yes, I've heard the standard anecdotes that he has told and I am sure that there are better sources than myself for them.

M: Did he ever say anything to you in regard to integration and education?

G: Oh, yes.

M: And the problems therein?

G: Oh yes. We talked about it a great deal.

M: It was a long-term headache for you.

G: It was a very hard thing and a very interesting thing. Because he had reason to know, far better than any of the rest of us, what a tough thing that was politically and sociologically. By that, I mean the whole process of integration and desegregation. He understood the Civil Rights Act and its implications, he understood the enemies that he would make, he knew all of the arguments on the other side. Yet he stood very, very firmly on this subject. He supported me consistently.

And this is not, you know, this is not a matter of five or six crises a year, this is a matter of daily pressure, the waters dripping on the rock. Every time that he called--not every time obviously--but more times than you could possibly imagine, when he approached a southern committee chairman--and they're almost all southern--to get one of his pieces of legislation pushed through, he would be reminded that his men in HEW were "persecuting" the South on the school desegregation question. And in effect those southern chairmen, not just with the President but with everybody connected with the White House, never tired of reminding the White House that they were not in a mood to be friendly about other legislation as long as this desegregation program--you know the whole attempt to desegrate the schools--continued. And that's a pretty tough thing for a President to stand firm, which he did. And he took the pressures, he didn't pass them off on me, he took them. Of course I was taking my own pressures, but at least

I didn't have added to my pressures the pressures that he was getting. And I always felt that there was behind me a man who would stay put. And he did.

M: In HEW did you also run into problems with, say, consumer protection? Was that an issue for you?

G: Oh yes, because we had the Food and Drug Administration. And when I came in the Food and Drug Administration was in one of those situations that an executive agency gets into occasionally (the Foreign Aid Agency has been in since it began), where it gets kicked around by everyone, attacked, criticized. Nobody had a good word for it. It was one of my top priorities when I came in. I talked to a great many people on the Hill and outside about the Food and Drug Administration. I concluded that it needed considerably stronger leadership than it had, that part of its problem was inadequacies of organization and administration, and I concluded that it needed a pretty tough guy to run it.

My own belief is that the head of a regulatory agency has to be a man who is pretty aggressive about the public interest. He cannot be just a passive chairman-of-the-committee-type, he has to be a man who has a little zest for resisting the pressures and dealing with these very difficult situations.

So I picked Jim Goddard, who was in the Public Health Service and had a name as an aggressive administrator, and, believe me, he turned that situation around very rapidly. He went on the attack. His wisdom was not unfailing, but he was a strong, courageous, positive person who lifted that agency up by providing it with the leadership and the morale and the aggressiveness that it needed.

M: Did the President back you up in this?

G: Oh yes. He had his questions from time to time about Goddard, but he supported me.

M: Now in HEW we've touched on education and health and the Food and Drug Administration. Sitting here thinking about it, are there other areas of difficulty that you ran into?

G: Thousands, thousands! I couldn't begin to tell you the areas and the problems that we had. Of course the obvious and most difficult one was the whole civil rights battle.

And we did something that was not followed up I'm sorry to say. We believed, we in HEW believed, that if you're going to carry through social changes as deep and difficult as were involved in the civil rights legislation, you had to have extremely consistent policy and doctrine. So we started with the legislative history, which is the committee meetings leading up to the legislation, added to that the legislation itself, added to that each court decision as it came out, and tried to keep HEW policy as close in to those as possible so that you had a cluster of legislative, executive, and judicial doctrine that built cohesively and provided something steady that people could look at and say, "Well, there it is, this is something we can understand and agree on."

I remember, for example, that a court decision would come along which would fit exactly into this growing body of doctrine, and people would say to me, "Isn't that great, the court agreed with you!" Well it wasn't accident. It was because we had been following earlier court decisions and we knew very well where the courts were headed in their interpretation and we were staying within this, so that all these people who were faced with grevious social changes

in the sense of changes in their attitudes, changes in the way they ran their institutions, could look to something steady and say "Here's what we have to live by."

Well it grieves me to say so, but when President Nixon came in, he shattered that--that growing coherence of doctrine--and we began to get the most astonishingly contradictory statements. The White House would say one thing and the Attorney General would say something else, the Secretary of HEW would do something else, the Civil Rights Administrator in HEW would say something else, and there was just absolute ambiguity and loss of this sense of coherence.

M: This coherence must have brought some of your lower level people into almost a continual dialogue with White House staff people. Is that right?

G: No.

M: How did you coordinate between HEW and the White House then? Was it between you and Johnson?

G: Well we didn't really have to coordinate, you see. The problems were between myself and the governors and the senators and congressmen from the South, between Harold Howe and the governors and the congressmen, and between our lower level people and the governors or the school superintendents. And only occasionally would something escalate to the point where the White House was involved, and we tried never to have it escalate to that point and so did the President. He would just say, "Go see John Gardner, settle it with him." And I was always very, very courteous to all these people.

M: If Howe, say, was working with a governor or a school system, would he keep the White House informed about what he was doing? Say, his

counterpart like Cater?

G: Oh yes. Depending on how important it was.

M: And I would assume he would also keep you informed about all that was going on, too.

G: That's right.

M: So that everybody knew what was going on?

G: That's right. But you couldn't keep the President continuously informed. We would inform him if there was some thing special. If someone had a special fit of temper and he had a piece of legislation going before that person, why we kept him [informed].

M: When you worked with Congress, would HEW work directly with Congress, or would you go through the White House liaison people, say, Barefoot Sanders or somebody like that?

G: Oh we worked directly with Congress. Oh, goodness, yes! We had a large legislative liaison group, and we couldn't possibly have done our work unless we worked directly with just the closest possibly ties with Congress.

M: Did you spend a lot of time on the Hill?

G: Oh yes.

M: Do you remember with fondness or dislike particular congressmen, who would help you or support you?

G: Oh yes, absolutely. Fondness for the ones who helped me and lack of fondness for the ones who interfered.

M: Were there any people in particular who were supportive of HEW in this period?

G: Yes, there were lots of people. I think the general atmosphere was one of support. I got along very well with the congressmen. One

of the surprises in going into public life was that I found I liked politicians. I found them very interesting and rather appealing people, not all of them obviously. Some I disliked, but I was very much struck with the fact that these men lived an incredibly risky life, and a life that I'd never seen before really where literally overnight your career ended if the vote came out the wrong way. And they are men who are apt to be quite outgoing, quite sensitive to what people think of them but often quite courageous, intelligent, far-seeing, and interesting people--lots of interesting traits. For example, almost every congressman is quick to be suspicious of possible hostility. I would call it paranoia except that people really are after them!

M: It's well-founded.

G: Yes, it's well-founded. They know that there are people who would like to take their jobs away, which you know is a rather special thing. We all face that sometime, we know that someone would like our job, but these men live with it. They know that not only some people, but whole organized groups want to get them out of their job. And there's a quality about them I like. For example--well let me finish that thing of paranoia.

I found it crucially important, for example, because I had to turn so many people down, and I was not one to do special favors to congressmen by giving them grants, you know, that kind of thing. And when I turned a congressman down two or three times in a row I'd go up and see him, just to establish the fact that there was no personal enmity in this. But I also found that I'd do a lot of other things for congressmen that didn't involve any improprieties, such

as I'd go speak in their districts, give a commencement speech, or speak at the college they graduated from, or spend some time with a constituent. If an important constituent showed up, they just wanted me to say hello to him.

And they'd never forget a favor, most of them. If I'd go out and speak in their district (there are men who still talk about that and that was five years ago), they're grateful. And they'd figure that they owe you something. And it's a kind of thing you're not familiar with in civilian life, it's a kind of cash and carry, you know--if somebody helps you, you help them. And I found that rather interesting and I still haven't quite absorbed it into my being, but I like those people.

M: Do any particular congressmen come to mind that you remember with fondness in their support of HEW in the program?

G: Well I guess that I came to value strong congressmen more than I did ones who just agreed with me.

M: Whether for you or against you, huh?

G: Well, yes. If they're too much against you, your affection dims, I think. But I found that a man such as John Fogerty, a strong, strong man--he was chairman of the subcommittee on appropriations for HEW, a hard-drinking Irishman, very truculent, rough in his manner and often appearing hostile--but if you could convince John Fogerty you could go home and forget the whole issue. Because he would take it from there. If you sold him on an idea, he would take it through the subcommittee and he'd take it to the full committee and he'd take it to the floor and it was settled! Whereas, with some of the weaker men, the thing never got settled. Even if they agreed with you they

wouldn't carry it through. Now Laird was the same way, and Mel was very good and helpful on many occasions. If you sold him, something happened. The same with Wilbur Mills. I've had bitter disagreements with Wilbur Mills, but he's a very valuable public servant. And it's far better to have a strong, steady, clear-headed man and lose to him occasionally, than have one who flops all over the place, great fun to be with, agrees with you, but never get anything done. And you know Congress is a pretty weak instrument today, and a pretty ineffective one, and it's about as low in popular esteem, and I value these men who have the strength--personal strength--to move that institution along.

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN GARDNER (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID MC COMB

December 20, 1971

M: We're back on tape again. I want to ask you about the Department, in general, of HEW, and the difficulties in administrating such a mammoth organization. Now Ribicoff once called it a "can of worms." Is it really?

G: No. Certainly isn't. I think that it's difficult to administer but I think it could be administered, it can be administered, if certain things are carried through. And let me just tell you what they are.

Let me step back a bit and tell you what one of the problems in government is. Overload on the President, and lack of mechanisms below the President, which were much more severe in those days than they are now. We now have the Office of Management and Budget.

M: Okay. Mechanisms to relieve that load?

G: Mechanisms between the President and the cabinet. The classic statement about that is that a cabinet member reports only to the President, which I regard as absolute nonsense. Everybody has multiple bosses and so does a cabinet member. The cabinet member has the chairman of his various appropriations subcommittees, then he has the President, and then he has to cope with the Budget Bureau. No cabinet member's ego need be so fragile that he can't take some kind of direction beneath the President. I feel very strongly about this. I feel that there should be established clear mechanisms between the President and the cabinet. There were not in those days except for the Budget Bureau and Joe Califano. And Califano

was simply an arm of the President. But if you wanted something decided, if you came into conflict with some other department, it in effect never got decided, because you can't review a complex thing with the President. Anything of any complexity would take hours to review and no president has that time, so he tends to push it off on someone like Joe Califano, who had the time, but not the authority to arrive at a decision. So his tendency--the tendency of anyone in his position--would be simply to prolong the thing and see if some resolution couldn't be had just by having people meet till midnight and so forth, and they finally get tired of it and somebody gives in. But men of any conviction tend not to give in and I finally said to some of them at the White House, "Look, just create a three-man board and I'll abide by anything you say." I'd rather have it settled, than not settled. I'd rather have these decisions that I have to throw to the White House, interdepartmental decision, settled, done, finished, take it away! This business of unresolved things!

Now since you had no mechanism for so many years between the President and the cabinet, you begin to see over the years attempts to create this as in the forming of the Department of Defense. Put three together and you've got a super cabinet member, who at least took care of that segment so you didn't have three people report to the President. Then you've got the rise of the Budget Bureau, which again was an attempt to fill in this ground. Then you got HEW which was putting together about nine agencies and departments into one.

Now the reason I'm telling you all of this is that when people say HEW should be broken up, they're saying in effect that the President--he has hardly got time to see his Secretary of HEW now--is he going to have

time to see three instead of one! My argument always was that there's ample room for coordination at that level, until you get good coordination at the Office of Management and budget level, and if you had a deputy president or something like that, who could handle more delegations of power, you might split HEW up.

M: Okay. As an example of these unresolved issues between departments I have read of a case of HEW getting into conflict with OEO and even the labor department over welfare trainees and things like this, and that this was a sort of on-going, continuing conflict. Is this the kind of thing you're talking about?

G: That's right.

M: This just did not get resolved?

G: Never got resolved.

M: And you would meet with your cabinet counterparts and administrative heads and so forth, I would assume, to try to settle these things?

G: That's right. Never got it settled. And it isn't just in conflicts that it comes out. Those examples you give are perfect examples. OEO and labor--we never resolved our conflicts with them.

But it wasn't just in conflict that this came out. After the Detroit riots, for example, the President created a new cabinet committee on the cities. We never settled a blinking thing. Nothing! I mean, we would meet around at offices of various cabinet members, we'd chat, but there was no mechanism. We were all equals and we were all elaborately courteous to each other. There wasn't any mechanism that permitted you to say, "Now out of this conversation we're going to pull an agreement." And that would take a deputy president or somebody who had the President's authority and more time than the President.

M: How about within HEW itself?

G: Well within HEW, the problem was two-fold. One, just lack of adequate power at the center--at the top.

M: That meaning the secretary?

G: The secretary. I said there are two problems. It's all one problem. Lack of power at the top and a deliberate intent on the part of Congress that there be lack of power at the top. As long as there's lack of power at the top the congressmen can deal with the middle level bureaucracy. And that alliance between individual congressmen, particularly committee or subcommittee chairmen, with middle level bureaucrats and outside lobbyists, this unholy trinity is a part of permanent, invisible Washington. This is the invisible government that you can't lay your hands on and that accounts for a great deal of the frustration and significant policy making. It is not responsive to the public will, it is hidden. It is opposed to clear and rational public policy because if there is a clear, rational, widely understood public policy and a strong hand to enforce it, you can't wheel and deal. You can wheel and deal in an atmosphere of confusion. You can wheel and deal when authority is dispersed, scattered, and nobody quite knows where it is, but you know who the guy is in the bureaucracy that you've been fishing with for fifteen years, and your wives play bridge together, and if you're a congressman, or an outside lobbyist, you've got your connections and your deals and you work it out at that level. And so there's very good reason. People don't understand that there are forces that positively work against clear, rational development of high policy.

M: Then you as cabinet secretary realize this. What do you do about it?

G: Well, very little that you can do. One thing you can do is try to get

the control of your own people.

M: Do you do this by appointments and replacing people?

G: You can do it by appointments, and I had the very, very good luck to come in there when I had fourteen appointments to make. There were fourteen slots to be filled and I filled them with men, for the most part, who proved quite loyal and good to me, although some of the men who were already there were extremely loyal. There are some marvelous people in government and people of just the highest integrity. They do not play these games. But there are other people who do play these games.

The second thing, I think, any cabinet member or any government administrator has to do, is just make it crystal clear that he will not tolerate duplicity and, in fact, will punish it to the extent of his powers. And I made that very clear, and I said it just as flatly as I'm saying it to you, to my own staff, that I welcome their informal connections in all sorts of spheres. I wanted them to be open to the world in dealing with a lot of people, but that I hated duplicity and I would not tolerate it.

But beyond that, there's a lot that you can just never know. When you have a hundred thousand employees you just can't follow everybody. And you don't know, literally, that the question that is asked you by a member of your appropriations subcommittee when you go for a congressional hearing, you don't know whether that question was supplied by somebody on your own staff farther down the line who was serving his own purpose.

Well now, all of this is just an established part of government. It goes on all the time all over town. And until it's exposed and brought to the surface and people understand it, we're not going to solve it. We've got to first educate people, make them see how this thing works. You

have to have better lobbying controls, I think ultimately we will need some kind of disclosure of contacts between policy makers and lobbyists. There are all kinds of ways we might get at it, but it's a very complex problem.

M: If you take away that, is HEW still just too big to govern?

G: No.

M: There wasn't that problem?

G: Oh, no. Well, if there wasn't that problem, if Congress were willing to put the money into the office of the secretary that would permit it to manage, I see no problem of any serious dimensions. What you need in the office of the secretary is a legislative staff, a budget staff, a legal staff, and an evaluation staff, primarily. You know, a lot of other things like personnel and so forth, but if you're talking about controls, you're talking about framing the issues(?), if the secretary has the power to put the final stamp on the legislative proposals, if he has control of the budget, if he has an evaluation staff that can--and this is perhaps the most important of all because the great utopian breakthrough will be the day that you figure out how to hold a middle level bureaucrat accountable, and that means evaluation. And we don't have it now. We don't have any way of scoring performance, and the whole process of program planning and evaluation, which developed under President Johnson, was its purpose is this. And it has got to come, and we've got to have some way of establishing accountability. And of course one of the great games of the less effective bureaucrats was to create a system in which you couldn't find who was accountable--you know, everybody's signature is on the piece of paper and you couldn't assign accountability to one man. But this is going to be hard to do.

M: Now to switch the topic a little bit and talk about President Johnson and his personality. Was he an easy man to work with?

G: Basically for me he was an easy man to work with. He gave me a free hand, he gave me a lot of support. I think in terms of things that are rarely talked about--you see, consider for example the momentum that he supplied. This was absolutely priceless and he just provided a tremendous positive charge and positive movement that we all drew on. All leadership is momentum, and he not only provided it but he enabled the rest of us to get things done in an atmosphere of forward movement. There was a kind of feeling that, you know, "Now we're going to do something!"

M: You mean the fact that the President comes out and says, "I'm for health and education and these are important," this helps you as HEW's secretary to get legislation and things through?

G: Yes, but it's much deeper than that. His whole feeling about the country, and his own role, and about change, and about moving ahead, was so deep, and he communicated it so strongly that it wasn't just health and education--it reached into every department of government. There was a feeling that something was moving. And until the war caught up with him--and this kind of historic situation which in my view wasn't his fault, or anybody's fault, it was just a thing that happened and he was there when it happened--until that caught up with him he provided feeling of momentum, not just a feeling, but a <u>fact</u> of momentum, that was more valuable than all the other things that you talk about. When you say, "Is he an easy man to work for," you think of things such as, is he cranky, is he genial--that's secondary. He did something for everybody who worked for him, certainly in those first two or three years, that was infinitely more valuable. That was this one quality.

This second quality was the kind of support that he provided. I can't speak for other cabinet members, but in my case he gave very, very powerful support in the sense that he stood firm.

M: Isn't that part of the momentum?

G: Well, yes, and yet for a man who had come out of the legislature with this atmosphere of give-and-take and, you know, always be ready to trade off a point, it surprises me that--I mean, this is more the trait of the life-long administrator who has learned from years of administering that you just stay solid as a rock so that your men can function. I don't know enough about the Senate, maybe you learn that in the Senate too, but he certainly had it for me. He provided a base of strength that enabled me to do the things I had to do. You know, I was in fights every day, just endless! If it wasn't about birth control, it was about civil rights, or marijuana or all kind of things. HEW has all the battles.

M: You must have known the mind of the President on these matters, then.

G: Fairly well.

M: You two must have been working along the same channels, if you were fighting these fights and you knew that he would back you up. You must have known what he would have been thinking about these.

G: Well, pretty much, yes, but he tended to--on large areas he simply backed you. See, in HEW there are so many things. You have to list a hundred items to just put down the programs, when you think of juvenile delinquency, mental retardation, alcoholism and so on. So on a few critical things I would know in some detail where he stood, and I would communicate to him my views and so forth, but on a good many things his attitude was, "Well, if you fellows have thought it through, let's go."

M: So it's a matter of trust, too.

G: It was very much a matter of trust, and it has got to be.

M: You say he communicated momentum. How did he communicate momentum?

G: Well, first, I think by just the way he talked. For example, I barely knew him when I read that Michigan speech on education. And, my word! To find a president who is going to just say, "Education is it!" Well, he communicated this openness, this sense of forward movement, willingness to move. He brought lots of people in. Just his task forces, you see, represented maybe a couple hundred people who came in and sensed that here was a man who was ready to go.

And then he personally is a very dynamic man, just the way he charges around gives you that feeling. The sheer multiplicity of programs didn't always have good consequences, Obviously, if you do a lot of things you make mistakes, but the sense that the future was open and that you could move was very strong.

M: Do you have any impressions about his quality of mind, which means not only intellect but depth of thought, breadth, concern, this sort of thing?

G: Well, I think he is a highly intelligent man. I think he has a very good mind. I've watched him cope with extremely complicated things such as the budget, and there isn't any question of his capacity to handle a lot of facts, to sort them out, to deal with them. I think that his mind would best be characterized as an extremely purposeful mind; by that, I mean that he tended to organize all of it toward objectives that he was pressing for very, very strongly, which is a different kind of mind from a mind that is playful or a mind that is just reflective--just walking around a subject and trying to understand it for its own sake--or a mind that is critical. I think he had that enormously purposeful, still has,

Here this cast of mind that tends to use all of his mental forces to achieve a goal. He had a curiously detached side to him that didn't come up as often, but was very clear to me, always something of a surprise when I mentioned it to people, but there was a part of his mind that was detached and watching the whole jumble of events from not only detached but almost melancholy coolness.

For example, to show you the detachment, I talked to him at one time just after a press conference and I think in the last part of the press conference someone asked him a question about a statement that Richard Nixon had just made about the Viet Nam war, saying the administration had made a mistake or something, and President Johnson responded very quickly and very emphatically and really just slapped Nixon down in this statement and rather effectively.

And I saw him after the press conference and he asked what I thought of it, and it was one in which he had dealt with health and education subjects, and I said, "Well you handled those questions with great skill as far as we were concerned. Very helpful to us."

And he said, "Yes, but I should never have said that thing about Richard, it was a stupid thing to do." And it takes a little objectivity of mind to say something like that about yourself shortly after you've done it. He said, "It just wasn't sensible," and it was clear that he was sitting looking at that in a way that was entirely apart from the rest of his temperament.

Then I'll give you another example. It was sometime in maybe '66, the end of '66, and I forget what bill was up, but he would know the beautification bill or something, and he was defeated on it. And this was a time when there was a tremendous excitement about what

was going on and we were just pumping the legislation into Congress, getting things done, you know, top-speed. And he said--there were three or four of us sitting around and we got this word--and he said, "Well, when the history of the Johnson Administration is written, I suspect that historians will say that its downward course started with this bill." That's an astounding thing to hear from the man who is regarded publicly as the charging fullback who never thinks, but just drives--push, push, push--and again reflects this detached side of his mind that's looking at it with almost a different temperament, you might say, because a charging fullback is not a melancholy type of person. You know, to gain those yards you have to be optomistic, pushing ahead, forcing the issue with great energy, and this other side is a cool, astringent side.

M: But you're suggesting he was somehow both of those things.

G: That's right.

M: Did he use his cabinet people for jobs outside of their area? I'm thinking about this Honolulu meeting you went to, and you were sent to Viet Nam to make an assessment. Did he often do that sort of thing?

G: Not very often. And of course this was my area. I went over there on health and education. And it's hard to believe now, so much later, but actually the feeling was then--his feeling was that the war was going to end and we would have a major job of rebuilding this country. And his mind went directly to health, education and agriculture. He sent Freeman and myself over and, I don't know, maybe others, to look at these problems and see what we could do to build toward peacetime. Once in awhile he'd do something of that

sort. He sent me down to Miami when Miaminas were deeply worried about the Cuban immigration, but it wasn't very common.

M: In retrospect, do you have any thoughts about that Honolulu meeting?

G: The part of the meeting that I attended was really not high strategy. It was just a kind of general discussion of the health and education side of it, that was what I was there for. I said some words, some other cabinet members talked, there were lots of people in the room--it was a big meeting, there must have been a hundred and fifty people there, photographers and everything else. Now there may have been--I've no doubt that there were high strategy meetings also going on, but I didn't attend them.

M: A brief question about Mrs. Johnson. Do you have any thoughts about how she played her role of First Lady?

G: Yes. I think she is the most admirable woman I've seen in any job, and possibly the most admirable person, male or female, I've seen in any job. She is an incredible person. She had a great gift of warmth, combined with enormous shrewdness and judgment. The warmth was real and it never seemed to run out, and the judgment certainly never ran out. It had a great effect on the President. I saw many, many signs of the tie between them in terms of her judgment.

M: Can you give me a specific example?

G: Oh yes, I could give you--

M: Just one. I've heard this before, but people have a hard time giving me an example.

G: Well, let me give you a couple of examples. We were riding around on the ranch, the President and myself, and he said, "Well, I was going

to buy that 'X' thousand acres over there, but Lady Bird said not to and she's always right." And he went on to talk about something else.

And then we were down in Nashville, I think, and he was talking to an education group. Mrs. Johnson and I were sitting right behind him. He finished his text and then, as politicians often do, he went right on extemporizing. After he had gone on about 10 minutes beyond his text, Lady Bird said something to me, she said, "I think he should stop." And she got out a piece of paper and a pencil and started to write a note. She was about three feet behind him so she had to move her chair a little bit to reach out and tug his coattail. And the instant that he heard that chair squeak, he stopped in the middle of a sentence and he said, "I hear Lady Bird's french heels shuffling and I know it's time to stop." Fascinating connection between those two people. He went on for a few sentences, and then he said--he was telling things we'd done in the administration, how we'd tripled money spent for health, and tripled money spent for education, and built so many hospitals and so many schools and educated so many people and so forth--so he said, "You hear a lot of criticism but somebody must be doing something right." Well it was a real hard political sales pitch right at the end there, and he got a good hand from this group of educators.

We were in the plane going back that evening, and I was talking with Mrs. Johnson and he was talking to some other people. He swung around in his chair--he had this kind of swivel chair in the plane--and he turned and looked at Lady Bird and said, "I'll bet you didn't approve of my ending up that speech, saying, 'Somebody must be doing

something right.'" And she laughed and she said, "Well, I didn't think it was the best way to end a speech on education." He laughed and he turned to me and he said, "You see, your wife deserts you when you need her most!" But he obviously had her in mind. I mean, she was kind of his inner jury on that kind of thing, and, again, I had this feeling of a very, very close tie where he valued her judgment and sensed what her judgment was.

He was a very sensitive man, very curiously acute in his sensitivities. I found that time and again. For example, Mary Lasker had proposed DeBakey, this Houston surgeon, as head of NIH and she was pressing him very hard, Mary Lasker presses everything very hard, but with the President. We were at lunch in the White House and the President was about two seats away from me. He leaned over and he said, "John, I'll tell you there's a man"--I think he mentioned Mary Lasker--he said "Mary Lasker says that Mike DeBakey would be a very good head of NIH." And I gave what I thought was a completely poker-faced noncommittal answer. I forget what it was, but it was something like "Well, that's a very interesting idea; I'm interested to hear that and I'll look into it." I've forgotten, but it was something that I considered superbly noncommittal.

The next time this subject came up of a head for NIH, the President said, "Well, Mary Lasker thinks that Mike DeBakey would be a good man, but John doesn't like the idea." And he read my mind. You know, I thought I had shown no sign at all. But I did not think it was a good idea, and he just picked it up just as quickly as though I had said it to him.

M: Did you find it difficult to resign?

G: Oh yes, enormously difficult.

M: I would assume both for internal reasons and also because of your relationship with the President.

G: Well, I had developed a great affection for HEW and really I loved the place, and I loved many of the people in it and it was mutual in many cases. You know, to fight side by side with people on all of these issues and this intense air of excitement and exhilaration and real combat, real trouble, real fights, real enemies in some cases, makes it hard to part company. It was quite an emotional thing.

M: Why did you then?

G: Well, this is a question that bears on the whole publishability of this conversation and I'll be willing to provide it, if you would put a special--

M: Yes. I can tell you, if you wish you can restrict even a part of the tape, whatever you want to.

G: I would say that we will restrict this to oh, you know--we'll put some kind of special restriction on this.

M: You can decide that when you get the transcript.

G: Fine.

What happened was that I had become increasingly concerned about the state of the country, about the war, about the riots, about the course of events as I saw them. We were in January of 1968, the presidential election year. We had already had two or three cabinet dinners at which we were discussing what could be done to insure the re-election of President Johnson, talking about the strengths, weaknesses and vulnerability and so forth and so on, but talking in fairly political terms, not very intensely political

terms but we were talking about the coming election. And I found to my consternation some time in early January that I did not think that the President should run for re-election, which put me in a terrible position. Because literally every day something was occurring in which I was privy to conversations that should only be participated in by loyal members of the family, so to speak, and certainly things such as these cabinet dinners, and in fact as I told the President when I talked to him, I said "A President has a right to expect that every member of his cabinet supports him completely, politically as well as personally."

M: Your splitting point comes over Viet Nam?

G: No, let me finish the story. Oh, that's a big factor obviously in the situation. I wrote a letter of resignation, took it in and handed it to him, and he read it and laid it on the table and asked me why I did it. I told him just exactly what I told you a minute ago. I said, "Every President has a right to assume the complete allegiance, political and personal, of his cabinet members and his whole official family, and I have concluded that you should not run for re-election."

I think it's rather typical of the President that he's at his best in these adversary situations. He didn't bat an eye. He just said "Why?"

And I said, "Well, I just don't believe that you can unite the country. I just think that we're in a terrible passage in our history and that you cannot do what needs to be done, with the best will in the world. I just think that that is not in the cards for you." I said, "I think you have done great things in my field and I am

extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to work with you. I admire your achievements and your qualities, but this is something else. This is something that is a combination of historical circumstances, and where you find yourself now, and there it is."

And he said, "Well, I've had the same thought myself many times," which was a great surprise to me. And then he we went into quite a long period in the conversation in which he tried to discover sources of discontent of a substantive nature, and really felt I think that there were some disagreements that he could clear up if he could find out what they were. And the plain truth is that this conclusion I'd come to overrode everything else.

For example, we talked about the budget, and we had had a fight about the budget, but this was far deeper than the budget. I don't remember whether we touched on the war. But even if he'd changed his view on the war, I don't think it would have changed my conviction that the chapter was closed as far as he was concerned.

We then had three more conversations in which we discussed a lot of different things, but he was basically very magnanimous in his handling of this, accepting my judgment. He wanted to see if I wouldn't stay in government on some other basis, accept some other kind of job. He said, "Is there any assignment you'd like, is there anything you can take," and made it very clear that he wanted to keep my friendship. I assured him that that would be entirely possible, and in fact we have had a good relationship since then. Far better, I think, for the fact that we leveled and got the worst out on the table. I have no backlog of bitterness or anger or anything else, I have nothing but a friendly feeling toward him.

M: Did his own choice not to run again on March 31st of that year come as a surprise to you?

G: Well it was tremendously dramatic for me because he said to me--you see, there were four conversations altogether, and in each one he brought the subject up again, I didn't bring it up. He would say, "Now John, about this question that you raised of my running again. I'm going to do what Harry Truman did, I'm going to wait until the end of March." And each time he would mention this and he'd speculate a little about it and the problems and so forth, but what came out--well let me finish that story.

Then March 31st I was sitting at the dinner table and my wife said, "Are you going to listen to the Preident tonight?" I had something I was preparing for that was very time consuming, and I said, "Well, I'm afraid I can't." All of a sudden I said, "My God! It's March 31st. I'd better listen."

And we turned it on and it was really just one of the most dramatic things that I've ever been through, because I could see it coming and yet I couldn't. I could see that he was building toward what might be that, but it wasn't inevitable that it would be. And it was just a superb piece of the kind of thing that he liked to do, he did not like to telegraph his moves. And literally until the very end when he stopped, and then I forget how he started that final passage, but the minute--the first two or three words--and then I knew that this was it. But it was terribly dramatic to hear it. And in it he used phrases that he'd used with me two months before. Since then, in talking with people he'd talked to even before he'd talked to me, I'd gotten the same phrases and points

of view, so I'm convinced that in fact he had thought very, very hard about this for quite awhile, very deeply, and gone over and over it in his mind. In other words, what I'm saying is, when he told me that he'd thought about it many times, I'm sure he was saying the exact truth.

M: One further point. You left HEW, you went into Urban Coalition, and then finally into Common Cause. Now, is this subsequent career of yours an outgrowth of your experience in HEW and government, in dealing with an institution and bureaucracy and this sort of thing?

G: Oh yes, to a considerable degree. I was very much impressed in HEW with the role played by outside forces, good and bad, the behind-the-scenes lobbying of self-interest groups, often very crass and unattractive. And the on-stage lobbying of citizen groups that were demanding some kind of change. I found, for example, that some of these citizen groups were immensely helpful to me in getting done what I wanted to get done. I could have not done what I wanted to get done in the civil rights field were it not for some of the very responsible but tough, outside critics, who sometimes aimed their criticism at me, but were in fact my allies, were helping me by saying I had to such-and-such. In other words there was a vibrant public opinion that enabled me to formulate policy and carry it out.

This was true to a degree in the water and air pollution field although nothing like today. In those days they were just beginning to be excited, but to the degree that the citizens were excited I was able to do things I couldn't have done, and I really came to feel that this was a clear and necessary part of the formulation of public policy, and that there wasn't any reason in this world why effective

lobbying had to be limited to a professional group or a group that had monetary interests; that in fact the same techniques could be used by group that had the public interest at stake and at heart.

In fact this has proven out, because today we are not sitting outside lobbying mortar shells over the walls of government, we are working with allies inside. And everywhere we go we find good people inside who say in effect, "Thank God you've arrived, and you want to change this, you want to make it work." Every state legislature, which I wouldn't have believed because I have a rather low opinion of state legislatures, but you go to a state legislature, no matter how bad, and you will find in it some men who are eager to make that a better place, who don't want to live in a shambles and work in a shambles and have a demeaning environment in which to work. We find allies everywhere. So it did stem very much from my HEW experience.

M: This exhausts the questions I have for you. Do you have anything you wish to add?

G: I don't think I do. Let me just check here, I made a couple of notes the other day. I talked about the relation of HEW with the White House--no, I think that I covered that pretty well.

I do want to say one thing. I think that the President served his term during one of the roughest passages in the history of this country. I think we had something approaching a national nervous breakdown in 1967, '8 and '9, I really think that that's almost the phrase for it. This hysteria, the emotion, the anger that was released, the uncontrollable spasms of excitement and emotion that came out of the war, came out of the civil rights issue.

And in a way he inherited a great deal of this. I always

remember the chairman of a very, very large national corporation saying to me, "Well, in this business (that is the business of being a corporate board chairman), you make your reputation off the wise judgments of your predecessors and any good judgments you make will create a reputation for your successors. And the same for the failures." You've always living with this overlap of decisions and their consequences. And the civil rights thing, you know, 300 years and the thing was, you might say lanced, in the late '60's. And the anger boiled out. The war--there are varying judgments as to when we set ourselves on this course, but it certainly did not start in 1963 when President Johnson entered the White House. The main lines of the policy and the main attitudes and assumptions and so forth were well before him, and it hit him. All of these things combined, and I do not believe that any wisdom on his part could have really changed it. It's conceivable that a different personality--you know, the blessing of Eisenhower's combined reputation and grandfatherly charm might have diminished the trouble a little bit, but I doubt it. I doubt it. I think we had to go through that, and he had to be the victim of it unfortunately. In another time, but you just don't know, those judgments are too tough to make. It's so easy to second-guess, you know. You read those Pentagon papers and you think, "My goodness, if they'd only opened up a little more!" But it's just so hard to say in retrospect. I'm sure that things are going on right now that ought to be opened up.

M: Thank you for your time.

G: Glad to do it.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By John W. Gardner

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Service Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, John W. Gardner, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507(f)(3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not, for a period of 20 years be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it. This

restriction shall apply to and include employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed _____

Date April 5, 1972

Accepted _____ for

Archivist of the
United States

Date March 3, 1975