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INTERVIEW I

DATE: October 24, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: RONALD GOLDFARB

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 1

RG: --so I want to be sure you get what you want.

G: Okay. Let me ask you to briefly explain how you became associated with the War on Poverty. I understand that you are originally from New York or New Jersey. Do you want to explain how you got involved in the administration?

RG: Yes. I was working in the Department of Justice during the Kennedy Administration, trying organized crime cases, and had around this time reached the point where I thought I wanted to leave. I didn't know what I wanted to do and was looking about for what the next step would be. Just around that time there was some press coverage of the fact that [Sargent] Shriver had been appointed to head up a task force, and that because of lack of funds the way he was going to compose this task force was to get each major department of government to donate a person and keep them on their payroll and thereby have people with expertise from different fields but not have to get it budgeted. And it interested me, not because I had had any expertise in any of these substantive fields, but just [because] it was an exciting notion and it seemed like an important and valuable thing to do. Those were for me, and for a lot of people in Washington then, very idealistic

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times about the power of government to deal with problems. So it seemed like something that interested me and would be very useful to do for the short run.

So I asked I think it was [Nicholas] Katzenbach--I'm not 100 per cent sure, it might have been [Robert] Kennedy--told him that I wanted to leave, or that I had heard about the task force and that if the Justice Department didn't have anyone better to send and wanted to send somebody, I would like to go. I didn't really know exactly how I could be useful but, to the extent that they needed a lawyer over there, I was one who was interested and would like to do it. I think it then got kicked up to [Norbert] Schlei, who called [Adam] Yarmolinsky or somebody and said we've got a guy here who'd like to come and would you be interested in him.

During those days I was writing for the New Republic about justice affairs from the perspective of one who was concerned about the element of wealth in terms of how it affected the kind of justice people got. I believe I had written a book or was writing a book and had written an article, for example, about bail reform. So I was known and I think I was viewed to be an obvious person to send, not because I had written about what became OEO kinds of subjects, but because in terms of personality and interest and commitment and what-not, it was something that interested me. And after a few weeks I was told I could go.

So I went over to the offices at then the Peace Corps Building, and then there was a very small group of people, less than a dozen, I

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think. Yarmolinsky was kind of running things. Shriver was wearing two hats. The people who were there were [Christopher] Weeks and Ann [Oppenheimer] Hamilton and Jim Adler, again, a very small hard-core group, which stayed most of the time with a lot of bedlam. Lots of people blowing in and blowing out, you know, professors coming in from out of town and spending three days and leaving, and constituent groups coming in and going, and government people coming over for this project or that project and going. But it was a very small group. I believe that I was part of it very early on, and was one of a relatively small group that was there pretty much the whole time, though lots of people were coming and going as well. That's how I arrived.

G: Who did you work under or report to once you got there? Was there a--?

RG: Well, Yarmolinsky was kind of running it administratively. It was not so big or so organized that there were fiefdoms or jurisdictions and chains of command. I was given some projects and I worked on them on my own essentially, along with other people there. To the extent that I had to ask somebody about something, it was Yarmolinsky. When [Hyman] Bookbinder came later on, I touched base with him, but I think that was more my own personal taste because he was easy to deal with.

Thinking back, I did a lot of day-to-day, ad hoc things which I don't remember now: wrote an article for the ABA Journal, gave a speech to this group or that group. There was a lot of that kind of thing. In terms of projects, I remember one of them was to go through all of the government programs that existed in all of the agencies and

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see which ones of them touched on poverty-related projects. I almost made a book--in fact I did make a book--on all of those programs and where they were and what they did and what their budgets were, et cetera. [I] talked to the people who were running them so that we could find out what existed at that time, however diffused and spread out around government it was.

G: Was the object of this to achieve a measure of coordination?

RG: Yes, that was exactly what it was.

G: And maybe take over some programs, too?

RG: Oh, exactly, sure. The idea was that if there was a new agency, might it be a logical thing to pull all those things out, and then how much budget were we talking about, and how dear were they to different agencies, how well were they being administered, and did they add up to a program in and of themselves. I did this big book. It took a lot of time, and I remember making a loose-leaf book which included all of that information. I did it by going to the different agencies and locating the people, and with the collaboration of the people in those agencies, as well as my own individual research, making this book, which eventually was used as a resource book for this kind of thing.

G: What did you conclude about the status of poverty programs in the existing governmental framework?

RG: Well, it's hard to know whether my answer now is what I think now, which is in some measure based on what I learned then, or what it was that occurred to me at the time. So with that reservation I will say

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that essentially it was that we had the best of worlds and the worst of worlds in terms of social programs at that time affecting poverty. There were all kinds of programs around. It evidenced an interest on the part of Congress and the executive to do something about specific programs, and that was the best of worlds.

The worst of worlds was in the typical fashion that critics would criticize the federal government: they were all over the lot, they were duplicative, it was a many-headed monster and the people in one department didn't know what the people in another department were doing. An obvious conclusion to one who went through an exercise like this would be that there was a clear need for coordination of these programs, getting rid of some, consolidating others, accenting others, but bringing it all under one umbrella. I mean, an example was, as I recall, that there were lots of programs about dealing with rats, and you found them in the Interior Department under one rationale and in the Agriculture Department under another rationale and at HEW someplace else. It was smart and wise and sensible that we would do something about the problems of rats, but no one had heard of the other one's program, it seemed, and so it was operating kind of catch as catch can and in not such an effective way. And that, in a small way, I thought was duplicated in a lot of other situations.

G: Did the existing departments and agencies resist this sort of inquiry that you were making?

RG: No, because the word was out that they had to cooperate. I met, as you would expect, different levels of minimal cooperation and zealous

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cooperation, depending on the nature of personalities. It was a good lesson in the varieties of a bureaucracy. But nobody refused, because nobody could refuse. And we went through designated channels and that's why the notion of having representatives from different agencies made sense. When I wanted to go to the Agriculture Department on that day that I was dealing with the Agriculture Department, I would go to a guy like [James] Sundquist, who was an assistant secretary and came with the blessings of his Secretary, and I would say, "Jim, set me up an appointment," or "Who shall I call over at the Agriculture Department?" Then he would intervene and I would go and the skids were greased, so to speak.

G: So it really did have an interagency character?

RG: Yes.

G: Did you go as a representative of the Justice Department?

RG: No, I went as a representative of the task force.

G: No, I mean, I'm sorry--when you--

RG: Oh, but I was on the task force as a representative of the Justice Department, yes.

G: Did you feel inclined to represent the Justice Department's views and to report back to the Justice Department?

RG: No. No, because I didn't have the authority then. I wasn't a big shot, so to speak, in the Justice Department like an assistant attorney general was, and I never went back to Kennedy or any of those people to get okays, partly because I didn't have the clout then and partly because I was really serving as a generalist and not an expert.

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I was reading stuff there and educating myself while I was serving. I read [Michael] Harrington's book [The Other America] the first day I arrived, because I hadn't read it. I was really there as one who was interested spiritually and intellectually, but serving as a generalist.

G: Would it be accurate to say that there were two types of task force members, those who were more or less representatives of various departments, and those who were more or less generalists who--?

RG: --were there to be helpful?

G: Yes, were just--?

RG: Yes. And I was in the latter category clearly.

G: Not that the others were not helpful but. . . .

RG: Yes. No, I was there to do whatever I could do.

G: Were there others on the task force, like Dave Hackett or Norbert Schlei, who might have been considered more Justice Department representatives on the task force?

RG: My impression was that they weren't even on the task force, to be honest with you, because they never were physically there on a day-to-day basis. Now, they may have been nominated as the formal representatives of an agency. Schlei clearly was a liaison person, but he wasn't working on a day-to-day basis and didn't have an office at the task force and wasn't working his eight or twelve or whatever hours a day on the task force, as I was and Ann was and Weeks was and people like that. They were the people at the agency, at the department, who were coordinating for the department what was going on. On matters of major policy decision, I'm sure that they sat in with the Attorney

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General and talked about what was going on at the task force that affected the Justice Department.

G: Now, you've described one process of your task force activity. Let me ask you to describe another, and that is making decisions, deciding on programs. How was this done in the task force?

RG: Well, it was done in a very disorganized way. To a great degree it seemed to me that it was by virtue of people's own energy and imagination; they would evolve as activists who were in on meetings where things were done, and it had an awful lot to do with individuals' energies as well as their expertise, so that different people emerged as influential simply because they were activists and became influential. I would, for example, describe Sundquist as a person who came there with a particular expertise in a particular field and was doing his job, and a guy like Weeks as somebody who was a generalist who came in there but by virtue of the fact that he was energetic and assertive and involved, he came to have a relatively major role in that task force. It was due more to his own personality and initiative than to his expertise.

G: Well, how would this be brought about? Would it be brought about in meetings, discussions of background papers? Where would one exert influence? Were there large sessions of the task force or small groups within the task force? How did you--?

RG: Well, it was a process that was going on all of the time, and acts of influence and acts of policy-making took place in a variety of ways that weren't set out in working manuals. One didn't learn a process

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that was being followed. It was said at the time that Shriver's genius or his fault was that the way he did things was just to bring in lots of people and cut them loose and see what happened. Frequently, you would find different people doing the same thing and competing for his favor and attention and whatnot. Some people said that's the way he did the Peace Corps program, that he did that by design; it was a technique for having good ideas surface. And others felt that he didn't have any system and it was organized chaos that was going on, and what happened was totally fortuitous. And I don't know what the answer is: it may have been a little bit of both.

G: If one were to walk into the Peace Corps Building on any given day and arrive at the War on Poverty Task Force headquarters, would you be inclined to walk in on a meeting of task force members discussing some program, or would people be working individually?

RG: Both. Depending on any given moment in any given day, either would happen. It was more individual people working on particular things, but every once in a while everybody would get together and make a decision in a concerted way. I remember one example was the word was out one given day that we had to come up with a name for what turned out to be the VISTA program. We all went into a room and sat around a table and Shriver presided, and he said, "We have to make a decision on what we're going to call this thing," and he went around the table. He said, "Are we going to call it the Domestic Peace Corps? Are we going to call it this, that, or the other thing? And here are twenty suggested names from different sources, and I'd like to know what you

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think, and I'd like to know if anyone has any other ideas." We went around the table and discarded some and considered others and eventually narrowed it down to VISTA. I happen to remember that because I thought it was a terrible name because it reminded me of a windshield wiper solution and not a federal government agency. So I said that. But we went around the table and people discussed it and we made a decision: when we came out, it was decided that we would call this program VISTA.

So there were times like that, but those times were fewer than a much more chaotic and undefined process of activity which was just going on all the time. You were always, as a member of the task force, trying to figure out exactly how things were happening.

G: Were there various schools of philosophy as to how poverty should be dealt with?

RG: Yes, and that was going on at a level at least as much aside from the task force, if not more, than a concerted design to create a policy within the task force. People who had special expertise in the field, like Harrington and [Robert] Lampman and others, were coming in who had been in the field for a long time. They were the obvious people to turn to, and they were coming and arguing about whether you do or don't have a thing like the Job Corps, and whether it is or is not modeled after the FDR CCC, and things of that nature, major policy decisions. But we weren't sitting down, as I remember it, with an agenda of major policy decisions about how to run an agency so much, though it was discussed. Now, my impression may also be to some

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extent governed by what I was and was not brought into. I was not one of the inner sanctum and close advisers of Shriver who would have been necessarily in on those decisions. So it might have been going on with other people like Yarmolinsky and others, but I wasn't in on that.

G: How often did Shriver meet with the task force or participate in the task force?

RG: He was around all the time and he wasn't. If one had to see him, one could see him. You saw him around every day and we were at different times very close to his--

(Interruption)

I had the feeling that if I had something I wanted to tell Shriver, I could walk over to his secretary and say, "I need to talk to him about something" and get to see him, and people were all of the time. But he wasn't spending all of his time in a discrete part of the building working strictly on this kind of thing so that we had our sleeves rolled up and were working on things together, though he was in on lots of meetings.

G: Did Yarmolinsky make many of the day-to-day decisions, would you say?

RG: Yes, I would say that he was running the show.

G: How would you appraise his role in that capacity?

RG: No comment.

G: Really?

Did you sense any pressure from the established departments to

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have their particular views represented, say, the Labor Department wanting to--?

RG: Yes, I remember [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was one who would blow in and blow out. He came in as if he was the secretary of labor, and he had very clear-cut ideas about things and considered himself an expert in the field and dealt essentially with Shriver. Never sat down and worked with task force members, but perceived himself as somebody who was a major designer of what was going on. And I presume from that that he was feeling that he was representing the Department of Labor. On the other hand, somebody like Sundquist was clearly the Agriculture Department's guy and he was an integral part of the task force and he was there all of the time. So it operated in different ways.

G: Were representatives of the White House ever involved in the discussions?

RG: [Bill] Moyers was around a lot, not working all day, but frequently in talking to Yarmolinsky and Shriver.

G: Did you ever get a feeling for what President Johnson's perception of the War on Poverty was or what he thought it should be, things of this nature?

RG: I think there were general feelings about what was expected of us, but I would find it hard to spell it out now. His shadow was over the whole thing. Not so much in the details, I don't recall ever having the feeling that Johnson was particularly interested in an agriculture program affecting this or that group so much as that he really wanted all of the experts to be brought together to come up with the best major program and that he really wanted this to be a big statement of

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his administration and he cared about it a lot and he wanted to emphasize it a lot, but he was leaving the details to be worked out and presented to him for his approval.

G: Would you say that there were Johnson people on the task force or that it was more of a--?

RG: No, I don't remember any, except insofar as people who had positions of responsibility in different agencies may have historically come to those agencies via Johnson, but one didn't feel that. It was more a Kennedy kind of group, because they were mostly young people and they were mostly out of what was still the leftover Kennedy Administration.

G: I gather you had to move several times. After you left the Peace Corps Building you went to what--the old Court of Claims [Building]?

RG: The old Court of Claims Building. We were there for a while and then we were at this abandoned hospital or whatever over on F Street. The physical situation was always a problem, and it was not an ideal way to work. We all understood that there were needs for that, but it made for a mess.

G: Did the task force generate files and day-to-day working materials, do you recall?

RG: Sure. Sure. There was correspondence, files, and there were position papers. For example, in doing that book that I did about federal programs, I had probably a file cabinet full of all of the background literature on all of those programs, which I distilled then into a book, which itself was a big fat book. But there was then in one place

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all of the literature on all of those programs, which was a sensible thing to do.

G: Do you think that all of these were left in a repository somewhere or did people normally take their own working materials with them back to the department?

RG: I don't know the answer to that. I know that I left my stuff; I didn't take it.

G: I gather HEW wanted to run the poverty program at first, do you recall that, [Anthony] Celebrezze or Wilbur Cohen expressing that view?

RG: I don't doubt it, but I don't have recollections about that.

G: Do you think the task force had an urban bias as opposed to a rural orientation?

RG: I don't think they had an urban bias in that there were people who had thought out a policy and decided that this is where the emphasis ought to be. But I know for a fact that it is what happened and I think a lot of it simply had to do with who was there and what their experiences had been. People were doing what they knew about and they happened to know more about that. I don't think anybody there would have been arguing that they shouldn't be getting into rural areas.

But I do know from more recent history that rural problems were neglected. I just finished writing a book about migrant farm workers, and in the course of writing my book I talked to Sundquist, then at Brookings, and asked him about how come we didn't do anything for migrant farm workers, which we did not, though they were an obvious constituency in a program like this. Then I did a little history

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about what happened then and how we got into the programs that eventually got into the OEO package after the task force ended up.

The story, as I reported in this book based on interviews with Sundquist and others, is that we didn't do anything about migrant farm workers. Not because someone sat down and said they're not important enough or they don't fall into this jurisdiction, but simply because nobody knew about it or said anything about it. Fortuitously, when Sundquist took our package up to the Hill, two people on the Hill, one, [James] Roosevelt in the Congress, and the other, Pete Williams in the Senate, said, "I'll buy your agricultural program such as it is, but I have for years been pushing some pet programs and they must be added." Sundquist said, "It made sense to me. It was no great concession because I thought it was a good idea." So we said, "Sure, if that's the price, we'll pay it." And that's how we got into the OEO package eventually what treatment there was for an obvious constituency in this program which had never been planned into the program.

G: One of the measures that did not make it in, of course, was the minimum wage provision for migrant workers. This point was made at the hearings, I gather, but perhaps lacked the congressional support or maybe even the administrative support.

RG: Well, I don't know about that. I know about it from the perspective of the farm workers' historic problems, because I've just written about it and I know that they have been intentionally excluded as a result of the fact that historically the farm bloc has managed to have farm workers excluded from almost all major social welfare legislation

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for the last thirty or forty years. I would guess that if it came up then it was the same old battle fought out under a different set of circumstances.

G: Another rural aspect of the program was the land reform provision. Do you remember that? It was a part of Title III that contained a formula for buying farm land and reselling it to the rural poor.

RG: I do remember the subject coming up and I can't remember what happened about it. I'm sorry. I know it's one of those subjects that constantly comes up when you deal with poor people and the notion of whether or not this is Marxian or whether or not it is the essence of what you really have to do. But again, I've heard that argument made more recently, and I do have a recollection that it was a subject that was being considered but I don't remember it in any detail.

G: Did the task force later divide into groups, say, one group that would be a legal drafting team, another group that would have almost exclusive concern with, say, the Job Corps, and another with Community Action?

RG: Yes.

G: Which group did you work with?

RG: I didn't work significantly with any of those groups, but I think I may have had something to do with the drafting of the program, but it was not--obviously, or I'd have greater recollections about it. I would not say that I made a great contribution in terms of time and input.

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G: Did funding limitations at all affect your consideration of programs, the fact that, let's say, perhaps you would have liked to have included X program but knew that you wouldn't be able to get the money for it?

RG: I am sure that that was a consideration. It was never one that I had or argued for or was instructed to keep in mind, so that I never felt like I was working with one principle being keep in consideration that we're talking about an overall budget of X and any particular part has got to be related to that. But I do recall that it was a consideration at the end when we drafted the statement that the President gave to Congress, that we were talking about money. But I wasn't in on those conversations, so I don't know.

G: How about congressional input? Did you have any input from the Hill before the legislation was submitted?

RG: Yes, definitely.

G: Who was involved with that?

RG: There again I think each individual who is working significantly in their field was dealing with the appropriate liaison people. I would think, for example, that Sundquist would have been dealing with the agricultural committee staff people and key congressmen and senators. I know there was a lot of running up and down to the Hill and I'm sure that Yarmolinsky and Shriver and others were talking to people on the Hill in terms of overall policy. I myself don't think I had much contact with the Hill.

G: In addition to the legislation, the task force was also drawing up the

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President's message to transmit the legislation, I suppose. Did you work at all on the message? Do you recall how that was drafted?

RG: No, I remember different people taking cracks at it. I wouldn't be surprised if I contributed memos on subjects that made their way into that draft, but I was not one of the draftsmen.

G: The newspaper accounts at the time point to the fact that the White House was in an enormous hurry to get this program and the message--

RG: Yes, I remember there was a funny story about it. We got the word at one point that the President wanted a proposed message for Congress by such and such a date, and everybody was running around frantically for a very intensive period getting this thing done, and it was finally done at midnight, or whenever, and rushed over to him the day before. The next day we all came back kind of exhausted and depleted from that effort, and somebody came in saying, "Oh my God, we just heard from the White House. The President says it's twice as long as it ought to be. What are we going to do? He's giving this speech to Congress in one day. How will we ever cut it in half?" And I remember [Frank] Mankiewicz there at the time said, "That's easy, single space it." (Laughter)

G: One of the task force participants recalled three stages in the task force composition: the first stage involving theoreticians; the second phase, planners and logisticians; and the third phase, individuals who were operationally oriented. Do you recall such changes in the composition?

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RG: No, I don't. I would not have divided it that way. I would have said that there was, first, the clique of Shriver intimates who were the people he called up probably the first night when he came home after finding out he was going to do this, and they were the people whom he had dealt with in the Peace Corps. And the second group were the substantive experts who were then tapped in different agencies, the Sundquists and the Adlers and whatnot. And then came generalists and people who just wanted to be helpful, like myself. Then the final phase was all of the experts from outside blowing in and blowing out. Some staying, like Bookbinder, and others just coming in for a few days and leaving, never being heard from again.

G: There was one point, I suppose after the legislation was drawn and submitted, that Shriver was spending a lot of time on the Hill and Yarmolinsky was in a car accident and incapacitated for a while. Did this leave a crisis in communication or create any problem with the two top people both gone?

RG: Not that I remember.

G: Do you think that the War on Poverty was planned with the realization that Shriver would head it?

RG: I think it was everybody's expectation. It certainly was mine.

G: Did it influence the design of the program, do you think, other than Shriver's own input?

RG: Yes, in the sense that a different person running the task force would probably have operated differently and thus created a different symmetry for what was ultimately the agency and a different group of

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people. I believe that Shriver was chosen for whatever his genius was in the Peace Corps and it worked again with the poverty program in that he got it started and he got it through the Congress and designed something out of whole cloth. And I think that inevitably the resulting agency that came from that was something that had his imprint on it.

G: Let me ask you about the Community Action Program? Do you recall the origin of the Community Action Program idea in the task force?

RG: I don't.

G: Were task force members aware of the various antecedents, the HARYOU program and the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime that the AG's office was running or any of the other--?

RG: I'm sure they were, I just am very vague about it. I'm sure that there were discussions as this thing evolved, and that I was at least around the edges of some of them, but it's too vague now to recall.

G: Do you think that the Community Action Program was designed to work under the aegis of local government?

RG: I can't answer the question.

G: Do you have any specific recollections at all about the formulation of Community Action, do you think, or the term maximum feasible participation?

RG: I am very vague about it. It makes me think of Moynihan, but I can't remember the story.

G: Of course, the people who normally worked on that [were] I suppose like Jack Conway and Dick Boone and Hackett, would that be accurate?

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RG: I think so.

G: Was the task force, would you say, cognizant of Saul Alinsky's view of community organization and how it should be accomplished?

RG: I would be surprised if they weren't. I don't remember specific conversations about it, but I was aware of them and I didn't know as much about the field as a lot of the others there, so I'm sure it must have been.

G: Do you think that the task force anticipated the amount of turmoil that would be generated by Community Action, the friction between the poor people and local governmental institutions?

RG: I just don't know.

G: Really? You don't recall any discussions of this?

RG: No. It doesn't mean they didn't take place, but I don't remember.

G: Okay. Anything on the issue of family planning, the question of whether or not the Community Action Programs could give out birth control information, that sort of thing?

RG: I would bet we had people researching and discussing that, but I can't remember it. [Harold] Horowitz might be a person to talk to about that.

G: How about the Job Corps? Do you know where the name came from there?

RG: No. I do remember being in on conversations about it and its philosophy and what it ought to do, and the inevitable comparisons with the CCC. But it's all very vague now.

G: Well, initially it seems that the Defense Department was going to play a very major role in helping with the logistics of the program. Then

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there's some indication that a lot of liberals were upset about this and the military role was really toned down. Do you recall this issue at all?

RG: No, I don't. I kind of remember at one point somebody who was an ex-Defense Department whiz kid and who was then in private industry showed up and worked for a while on the task force on this subject. I remember personally wondering, because it kind of looked like that was a business that wanted to end up coming out with some contracts in the field. Now, that may have been an unfair conclusion to draw, but I remember that aspect of it.

G: Well, that certainly was a provision there, wasn't it? I mean, some of the people who I guess had Job Corps projects were private businesses, weren't they, industry, that sort of thing?

RG: Definitely.

G: What sort of kids was the Job Corps designed to reach, do you recall?

RG: I remember that it was discussed but I don't remember the specifics.

G: Do you recall in particular the question of whether or not you would try to get the most destitute, even though they might have criminal records and poor motivation?

RG: Yes, and I can recall conversations about whether or not it was realistic to compare this in motive and nature of the person to the CCC. Could you take a kid out of the streets in Harlem and stick him in the mountains of the state of Washington and teach him how to chop wood, and then what was he going to do with that when he came back to

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Harlem, those kinds of debates. But I'm afraid it's very vague in my mind now.

G: There seems to have been some doubt about the ability of the Employment Service to do the recruiting for the Job Corps. Do you recall that question?

RG: I have since studied the Employment Service in great depth in the course of my book about migrants, and I have very strong opinions about their ability to do things, but I don't remember being involved in it then. It's one of those funny situations where I have the substantive expertise now and did not then.

G: How about the decision to put the Neighborhood Youth Corps in the Department of Labor and have OEO run the Job Corps? Do you recall how that was made?

RG: No.

G: The fact that the Job Corps was originally designed only for men, do you remember this?

RG: No.

G: Any discussion in the task force of educational programs, do you recall this?

RG: I would say yes in the general and again plead the haziness of the distance of time about what the conversations were.

G: Let's talk about VISTA. Did the Peace Corps at all, do you think, fear competition from VISTA?

RG: That I don't know, because I was never a member of the Peace Corps, but I would say that clearly it was the model and it was the point of

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reference. The experience with the Peace Corps had to have been influential in the design of VISTA.

G: There I think you had a congressional rider or provision saying that no money could be spent to plan a VISTA-type program within the executive departments. Do you recall how you got around this provision?

RG: No, I don't remember it.

G: Do you think that the task force thought of VISTA in terms of volunteers doing community organization work as well as case work?

RG: I don't remember that being debated. It isn't my impression of what it was that they were going to do, though; it was more that they were going to be bringing expertise, tapping in on that same idealistic old person or young person or whatever who wanted to go to Tanzania to teach them how to set up sanitation systems, doing it in El Paso in the barrios.

G: Is there anything else on the formulation of the legislation that we haven't discussed that you can recall?

RG: I just don't remember.

G: How about the legislation on the Hill? Did you participate in any way in getting the program passed?

RG: No. I never testified, never prepared anybody's testimony.

G: Did you feel that the program was altered significantly by the Congress in any way?

RG: I remember thinking there were significant changes, but I can't remember what they were. The only one unfortunately that stands out in my mind was the battle over Yarmolinsky. The clear impression that

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everybody had was that Congress really held him for ransom. But I don't know. . . .

I also went back to the Justice Department around that time. At some point after the President's message, we pared down and people started going back to their agencies. There wasn't that much to do. The hard core remained; those were all people who were jockeying for positions in the new agency, and it was clear to me all along that that was not what my motive was for coming, so it was no reason to stay. So I left and some of this work on the legislation and the setting up of the new agency probably was going on with a much smaller group of which I was not a part.

G: I see. Okay. In retrospect, if you had planned it differently, what would you have done different in terms of OEO?

RG: I do not claim to have had a role in the design of what happened, so I don't look back on it as an expert who was in on the design who would now design it differently. I now have substantive expertise in some of these fields that I did not have then, so I can't make that kind of comparison. I was interested in then, and I am still interested in, the Legal Services dimension of it. Edgar Cahn, if you haven't talked to, you should talk to, because he was really the father of that notion and he was around then and I worked with him slightly.

G: In the task force period?

RG: Yes.

G: I assumed he came later.

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RG: He was not on the task force but he came over, again delegated in and out, and I dealt with him on that and thought that his notion was a very critical one.

G: But there was nothing in the original legislation for Legal Services.

RG: No. No. That's why I say I was not a designer then who excluded it, and so I would say now that if I had it to do over I would include it. I would only say that I now have more expertise and while I knew about that then, I would have probably been more assertive in trying to--I think I could have made a more concrete contribution there because there I did have some expertise, and I did think the idea was good, and I suppose if I was back there again now, knowing what I now know, I'd have made much more of trying to contribute in that area.

G: Do you recall the extent to which that was discussed in the task force though, Legal Services?

RG: Yes. It was strictly Cahn being introduced to Shriver and coming over there and being told to do his thing and work with me because I was the Justice guy. Cahn was really so much the designer of his own thing that he was not incorporated into the program, didn't stay and work under me or anything like that. He kind of blew in as one of those consultants and dealt strictly with Shriver on it.

G: Well, is there anything else that we haven't covered on this aspect--?

RG: I can't think of anything else.

G: Really? Okay. Well, I certainly thank you.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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