INTERVIEWEE: DR. SAM HALPERIN

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. MC COMB

February 24, 1969

M: This is an interview with Dr. Samuel Halperin. I'm in his office in Washington, D. C. The address is 2000 L Street, Northwest, Room 801-A. The name of the program he now directs is Educational Staff Seminar. The date is February 24; the time is 4:15 in the afternoon; and my name is David McComb.

First of all, Dr. Halperin, I'd like to know something about your background--where you were born and when?

H: I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, May 10, 1930 and am a graduate of the Chicago public schools. I began university studies in political science at Illinois Instutute of Technology, and subsequently received a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and Ph.D. in political science from Washington University in St. Louis.

M: All three degrees from Washington?

H: Correct.

M: When was it you received your--?

H: [I] received the doctorate in 1956. [I] was a college professor at Wayne State University in Detroit for four years. I came to Washington, D. C., in September of 1960 as a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association.

It was my intention at that time to learn more about the legislative process and particularly about the politics of education. I worked with

the new chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Adam Clayton Powell, during the first six months of 1961; and then with Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, who was also the new Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

In October 1961 I joined the staff of the Office of Education in HEW as a legislative specialist.

M: What does this mean legislative specialist?

H: I was one of two professional staff persons responsible for handling of Congressional relations and, particularly for the development of new legislation in the Office of Education.

In 1963 I headed up a branch called Legislative Planning. In 1964 I became the Director of the Office of Legislation and Congressional Relations, working directly with the Commissioner of Education, Francis Koppel.

M: Let me clear up a point. When you say legislative planning, is that still within the Office of Education?

H: Yes.

M: Your '64 job is the same.

H: Right.

M: In 1965 the Assistant Commissioner for Legislation--Peter Muirhead--became the Associate Commissioner for Higher Education, and I became Assistant Commissioner for Legislation. That is to say, I was in charge of the legislative program of the Office of Education--de facto, beginning in late 1964 and de jure beginning in 1965.

In March 1966 I left the Office of Education and became Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation under Assistant Secretary Ralph Huitt and left that job with Mr. Huitt on January 20, 1969.

M: That's when you set up this Educational Staff Seminar?

H: Correct.

M: To back up here, you worked for a while with Adam Clayton Powell and Wayne Morse. Do you have any impressions of those men?

H: Yes, I have dictated the impressions I had of both those gentlemen as part of this oral history project, and the tapes should be available through Mr. Harry Selden at the Office of Education.

M: Let's read this onto the tape then. This oral history project that you have dictated for--are these tapes going to be in the Lyndon Johnson Library?

H: That was my understanding when I dictated them, yes.

M: And this was a program within Health, Eudcation, and Welfare?

H: It was part of our participation in the history of the Johnson Administration.

M: I see. Then you were in on some of the--I don't want to say revolutionary, but I suppose in a sense they're evolutionary--acts in the realm of education. I have a checklist of what seems to be the major educational enactments of this period which I might run through just to.

H: My general feeling is that that wouldn't be very fruitful. There are any number of publications that list them. As you know, when Mr. Johnson left office, he had under his belt some sixty education bills, and there is an official list that lists those sixty enactments. Many of them, of course, are counted as health as well as education, such as the Health Professions Act or the Nurse Training Act. There is juvenile delinquency and several different statutes in the Office of Economic Opportunity. There are many, many statutes. Of course, the key statute of that period was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of '65. I suppose the second

major statute would have been the Higher Education Act of '65. There were, as well, two major overhauls of the vocational educational program, and numerous other pieces of legislation, many of which in any normal time would have been considered major statutes.

I'd like to say if I may, just by way of background, that I personally never had a meeting with the President or was not myself present at any meeting with the President during any of the period with which I worked in legislation except the so-called Monday morning meetings with the legislative representatives of the various departments--meetings held by Mr. Larry O'Brien and later by Barefoot Sanders. Mr. Johnson, as you probably know, was a frequent attender at those meetings and did speak to us about legislation in general. But I personally was not present at any meeting with the President. My only personal contact with him, other than the Monday morning meetings, was the receipt by him of numerous fountain pens at the signing of some of these major bills.

My work was primarily with the people who are the principal historical figures of this period--first, Francis Keppel, Commissioner of Education under President Kennedy and later President Johnson; Secretary [John W.] Gardner; Secretary [Wilbur] J. Cohen; Assistant Secretary Ralph Huitt. I also worked very closely with Commissioner of Education Harold Howe, first directly under him as Assistant Commissioner, but also when I transferred to HEW I continued a very close working relationship with him, until he left the Office of Education in late 1968.

M: Have you recorded in this other oral history program any other impressions about these people you just mentioned--any instances of their ability or of what they have contributed to Health, Education, and Welfare?

H: No, I don't think so.

M: Let me preface questions of this nature with a statement that Health, Education, and Welfare as a Department had a reputation of being almost ungovernable before the coming of Gardner. Ribicoff, for example, at one time referred to it as a can of worms.

H: I think Mr. Ribicoff found HEW ungovernable because he was not particularly interested in making the effort. He was not, in my view, a particularly hard-working Secretary. He was bored by the details of governance. I don't think he ever understood HEW. His political ambitions were such that he was very eager to get on with the next job which was the U.S. Senate.

And I think, though it sounds bitter in the way I've just said it, that if HEW is ungovernable, it's because one make it so. I don't think that characterization was shared by Mr. Gardner, who also never really made an effort to govern the lower eshelons of the Department. But he found that HEW responded very well to leadership; that it did change direction, and that it did crave a person at the helm who knew what he wanted. In Mr. Cohen's brief tenure, I think we've all seen, and the record will bear out, that many, many initiatives were undertaken and many important reorganizations were commenced or completed. And I just don't think, based on that experience, that one could speak of HEW as being ungovernable.

M: Then, from your experience with it, it is a reasonable administrative division in government that can work and do its job as it's supposed to.

H: I think that many of us have notions as to how the federal government should be organized or reorganized. I myself feel that education is too

far down the totem pole. While it may or may not deserve a Cabinet level function, I'd like to see greater visibility given to education in some way.

But that does not argue for the statement made so often that HEW is ungovernable, and that it's a mess. To be sure any Secretary coming in, particularly a Secretary coming in with tight budgetary resources such as Mr. Gardner faced and such as Mr. Cohen faced, finds it somewhat difficult to put personal imprint on a Department. It's a lot easier when you have a lot of new money and a lot of new programs. Nevertheless, I think both those gentlemen showed that the Department is capable of leadership and direction.

M: Did you run into any interdepartmental conflicts, say, with the Department of Labor over educational policies?

H: Yes, but again my own association with that conflict was perhaps at a lower level and less bitter than that experiences, for example, by Mr. Gardner and Mr. Cohen. But, in general, in the entire area of manpower, vocational education and training, and retraining there is a kind of conceptual as well as a bureaucratic struggle. Many of the HEW programs do involve training or impinge upon the responsibilities of the Department of Labor. Mr. Wirtz was regarded by many people in HEW, whether fairly or unfairly, as a very ambitious empire-building bureaucrat who wanted to stop HEW from doing many of the things that it wanted to do. And I'm sure that some of those views were widely shared in the Department of Labor. I think one of the tasks of the new Administration has to be to try to build an area of division of labor between and among these various Departments...or perhaps to merge them.

I might add that the conflict that existed between Labor and HEW was not limited to the field of education. You also had this conflict in the

area of the aging, for example, where there was a division of opinion as to who should pay elderly persons for public service employment--whether this was a Department of Labor function or a HEW function. It should also be said that this conflict, at least in part, is a reflection of the conflicts in the field. Specifically, the vocational educators and the American Vocational Association feel that vocational education and training and manpower development really belong in the public schools under their jurisdiction. And they're very jealous of the involvement and responsibilities of the Department of Labor and the local employment services. I'm sure there are other conflicts that I'm less aware of, but this quarrel in Washington has to be seen in the perspective of differing interests and alliances out in the field.

There were other conflicts in Departments--shall we say, differences of opinion, differences in interest--the Office of Economic Opportunity and HEW to be sure. There are of course many, many differences of opinion in the field of higher education between many of the scientific agencies and agencies like the Office of Education, which sees its mission as the general support and strengthening of higher education as distinct from a mission orientation of a particular federal agency.

M: Is the solution to such things reorganization, such as a Department of Education and Labor?

H: I think that reorganization is essential, for greater consolidation, greater coordination. A policy mechanism for bringing about better planning and use of our resources, I think, is essential. By the way, Harold Howe and I quite spontaneously in July of '68 recorded a thirty-some page discussion on how we felt about issues such as the one you're just asking about. I'd like very much for that to be made a part of the record, and

I will give you a copy.

M: It has already been printed? Good. Then we can just put that in your file, and it'll go into the Archives.

Were you impressed with the governing of HEW by Gardner and Cohen? Were they capable men in their positions?

H: I think you have to look at each of these leaders individually, of course, and put it in the context of their time. Gardner came in a time of great euphoria when the Great Society was in its heyday--the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Medicare had become law. The job was then to administer them. The Viet Nam toll had not yet been felt. Money still was abundant. and Mr. Gardner was the great charismatic leader with the "long view" of America's destiny which fitted in perfectly with the excitement of the times. His job then was to bring aboard a new cadre of leadership to excite and to motivate the Department. I think this he did. We had many, many able assistant secretaries and many deputies. Mr. Gardner, for example, was able to get a substantial number of new high-grade, super-grade, slots for deputy assistant secretaries such as myself by the way, and others. And I thought it was a rather exciting team. How Mr. Gardner would have survived and managed in the atmosphere of '68 is, I think a question.

Mr. Cohen, of course, came in as you might say, a second fiddle when the clock had run down a great deal. But this man has enormous intellectual and physical and psychic resources, so he just managed to keep going as if there were no January 20, 1969. And this has been commented on many times. I can't embellish or enrich upon the commentaries. But Mr. Cohen, in his brief period, also managed to give a substantial

number of new starts: as you know, the famous eleven-and-a-half pounds of advice that he gave to his successor.

So they're really two different men in two different times. Both I think rather phenomenal men--as were, I might add, the Commissioners of Education Frank Keppel and Harold Howe. It was a rather unusual aggregation of men. There's always a tendency to compare Cohen to Gardner, to compare Howe to Keppel. I think this is unfortunate and not very productive. Each of them had great strengths. Each of them had, you might say, blind spots, I suppose. But each of them in his own way helped to move the Department and the Office of Education along rather substantially.

M: What about your relationship to the White House staff? Was this good, or was it difficult to work with the White House staff? Were they helpful, or did they try to run the Office of Education? What was the relationship there?

H: Again, we have to specify what the nature of the relations were. The bulk of my relations when I was in charge of legislation at the Office of Education were with Douglass Cater, who at that time, in '65, was extremely involved with the development of the ESEA and the Higher Education Act, and who was involved very much with the Congressional drive to get them enacted. My relations with him were frequent and generally satisfactory, although I found him to be quite irritable and somewhat hard to live with at times. But I don't think that his demeanor was particularly unbearable, or unusual. We all understood the tremendous pressures, or at least believed that there were tremendous pressures, of working in the White House, and we kind of expected it. But he was an understanding

staff person, a very energetic and hard-driving one, and extremely dedicated and committed to the President's interests and the interests of the legislation.

Other relations that I had, particularly when I came to HEW, were with Henry H. Wilson and, later, with Barefoot Sanders. Sanders I found to be a rather hard-working fellow, but I did not ever detect any great knowledge of our affairs, as for example, with Mr. Cater. To be sure, they had very different jobs. One was a special assistant to the President with great specialization in education and health. Mr. Sanders had to worry about everything from pollution to federal pay to conservation to industrial mobilization, and you can't and shouldn't compare the two. But he certainly was an intelligent and, I think, an effective Congressional liaison man.

There were others at the White House with whom relations, I think, were less than satisfactory. I think Mr. Califano gave the impression from afar that he would only deal with Secretaries of Departments or with God Almighty--and then only grudgingly. Califano went to great lengths to make the decisions. I don't believe he checked with the President on many key issues. With as few people around who knew the details of what was going on as possible, many of the decisions were made by him with a person such as Secretary Gardner who did not really know the substance and the detail of many of the proposals and couldn't be expected to. I found that Mr. Califano was arrogant, uninformed, bright but exceedingly thin because he was spread over such a broad area. I'm not at all certain that the outcome of much of the legislation could fairly be credited to the brilliance of his work as much as it was to the whole drive, the whole

momentum of the Johnson Administration. I thought, from my perspective, the staff work was very thin and very sloppy at that angle.

And that goes to some of Mr. Califano's assistants. I know he was a man reputedly of great brilliance in some quarters--at least that's the reputation. But I had the impression, particularly in '67, '68, of great haste, great superficiality. And political naivete of the highest order was expressed on many occasions that I know about.

M: And you would extend this to his assistants?

H: At least to one of his assistants, Jr. [James] Gaither, I would, yes. But you know, these reflections are very, very difficult for me to really detail and sustain. These are impressions, and I have to represent them as such. The staff work of Gaither and Califano doesn't begin to compare, for example, to the sophistication of the staff work that Mr. Cater engaged in, let's say, in '64-'65. I have to say that by '67-'68 perhaps all of us were doing sloppier work. We were over-extended, over-tired, and our morale left a lot to be desired. I had the impression, for example, that Mr. Cater got involved in more and more things, less and less depth in the field of education, for example, by '68, certainly by '67, even.

M: From your remarks, I would get the inference that some of the ideas that came out of HEW, or from the Office of Education, were blocked by the staff rather than reaching the President. Is this true?

H: I would say that it was more likely that many of the pieces of legislation that we went to the Hill with were created in the White House with negligible staff work [and] negligible backup rather than frustration on my part because they didn't take HEW ideas. I don't think that the Office

of Education in any of this period, with the exception of the very fertile minds of Keppel and Howe and Cohen and so on, was capable of great creativity. I don't think that the Office of Education really was the place--in the bowels of the organization--from which rather new and imaginative and important ideas emerged. Quite frequently jazzy slogans, such as Networks for Knowledge and Partnership for Earning and Learning, Child Safety Act, and so on, bubbled up from the White House. It just seems to me that, while we have to recognize that they would not probably have bubbled up from the conventional organization, nevertheless there was--to use a phrase I've already used--inexcusably sloppy development, insufficient base-touching with the Congress, negligible base-touching with key interest groups, unlike the period of '64, for example, [and] early '65 where there was excellent legislative relationships with major affected constitutencies. This by and large was absent in '67 and '68.

M: It might be very helpful if you could take a specific example, say from 1964, and say how this work was well-developed, and then another one, say from 1968, and say how it wasn't. Do any specific examples come to mind?

H: Several examples come to mind. In the famous church-state accommodation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, it is widely known that the conversations among the public school sector, among the private schools, and among the HEW bureaucracy--Wilbur Cohen, Frank Keppel--date back at least to 1963. There were frequent luncheons off the official premises. There were frequent efforts to sound out feelings and beliefs as well as facts. There were efforts not to tie people down to specific bills, but to try to ascertain what would happen if a particular piece of legislation of such-and-such hypothetical character were to be submitted to the Congress.

What would the group do? There was a mutual give and take. There was a building up of confidence.

In 1965 in the Higher Education Act when we attempted and later successfully achieved the enactment of the guaranteed student loan program, there were literally dozens of meetings between high Treasury officials, Office of Education officials, usually catalyzed by Douglass Cater, and consisting of the people I've mentioned plus representatives of the American Bankers Association, united Studen Aid Fund, various state loan guarantee officers, and persons generally knowledgeable about this problem. It was exhausting work; many, many meetings, many position papers; many memos; and many drafts of bills. But there was a shared community of interest.

M: Was Sorensen in on that?

H: No, he was not. This was in '65, and he had gone by then. I don't remember the date of his departure.

A very modest example of a contrary situation would be a proposal that was literally shoved down the throats of HEW--a proposal which on the surface sounds good, and you would think everyone would be for--a proposal for comprehensive educational planning. This was an amendment that Mr. Califano and his staff were very interested in to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It's a program that was very much wanted by the Budget Bureau. But it was an extremely controversial thing to force the states and localities, particularly in conjunction with institutions of higher learning, to plan comprehensively for the use of resources state-wide, all under the control of the Governor. A proposal like that, which makes a lot of sense, should have been developed over a period of time. There should have been frequent testing of alternatives. There

should have been widespread consultation with the affected parties, and there was very little of any of that. It was one of those things that was done by fiat by the staff people. I cannot believe that the President of the United States with his political sophistication could have ever looked at the proposal and said, "Yes, it seems just right to me. Let's go." This is one of these relatively small issues from the point of view of the President--big from the point of view of the constituencies, but small from the point of view of the President--which you just send ahead on the confidence that you repose in your staff. But I think that President Johnson's confidence was misplaced. We lost that proposal as we lost a number of others...largely due to poor staffwork.

By the way, every time a person such as myself complained about what I considered to be the bad political relationships and bad political soundings, the response that I got from the White House goes something like, "Well, look at our batting average here. You're batting 850 to 900 here. What else do you want? If our legislation was as bad as you say, you wouldn't be batting so well." But this is typical of the various superficial fellings that were often expressed over there about the Congress. They viewed the Congress as an instrument to be manipulated rather than to be worked with. It just seemed to me that the fact that we were able to pull all these chestnuts out of the fire, the fact that much of this legislation emerged from the Congress in a substantially different--and often improved--form than we sent it up--so that the batting average looks good but the substance is different, seemed to elude people at the White House. And they seemed to be batting-average conscious rather than substance conscious.

I could give other examples, such as the so-called Child Safety Act, where we lost the substance, but we still enacted a piece called Child Safety Act. That counted as a Johnson victory where, of course, what we wanted was not what we got.

M: This brings up the question of the relationship of the President in all of this. From the point of view of a political scientist, you might have some insight into his administration of the White House staff and the various Departments, and shy there was this difficulty between the White House staff and the Departments such as the one you were in.

H: I'm not so sure that it's correct to say that there was great difficulty. I do not know whether the tension to which I referred was typical or atypical. I just don't know. I have no direct knowledge whatsoever of staff relations between the President and his people. We occasionally observed that these people were working under great tension. We sometimes assumed that they had just been chewed out, but this is all a surmise and speculation.

I would say that generally speaking there was a little too much gimmickry for my taste in some of these legislative proposals. There were too many under-funded small starts rather than an overall philosophy that would be built on from year to year. Each year we started de novo trying to figure out, "Well, we did this last year. What do we do for kicks this year!" Each year we tried to get a few more pieces enacted, and we did. I think what we enacted was generally quite good and I think it'll stand the test of time. But a lot of this was due to the wisdom of the Congress in smoothing out these rough pieces of legislation, some of the work in HEW in trying to make do with what I considered a bad situation, rather

than, again, because of the thoughtfulness, philosophical unity, the consistency of the Johnson program.

Now again, I try to put myself in the shoes of the guys in the White House. And what I'm talking about is really peanuts. They had billions of problems, and many, many pieces of legislation. So my complaints area really just a kind of a sand grain on this huge beach, and, in that sense, maybe they have to be discounted. But, nevertheless, they were there, and one could only have hoped for a better quality of staff work. I would say that we could have had better felling for the Johnson Administration, better relations with the Congress, better relations with the interest groups, and I think better relations with the constituences that are served by legislation, if there had been better staff work--better planning.

M: You've mentioned several times the role of Congress. Did you work closely with Congressional leaders?

H: My job as head of legislation in OE and as the Number Two man in HEW was to work very closely with the Congress on a daily basis. Of course, as you know, this varies greatly with the issue and the house involved.

In the House, you only work with Speaker McCormack when you've got a crisis, and so Larry O'Brien or Henry Hall Wilson or Barefoot Sanders would work with the Speaker and Mr. Albert, occasionally bringing us in when there was a major issue. For example, the so-called Quie amendment of 1967 involved a great deal of head-counting, marshalling of forces, a great deal of political propaganda. We did meet with Mr. Albert and Mr. McCormack from time to time, and I was present at some of those meetings.

In the Senate, again, we occasionally met with Mr. Mansfield, usually on civil rights or related matters. But by and large my work, and the work of my boss, was to work with individual staff members on committees and with the Members or in the House of Representatives. We worked with Carl Perkins, Frank Thompson, John Brademas, Patsy Mink, Jim Ohara, Lloyd Meeds, and we worked with Roman Pucinski. It just depends upon the issue. (Mr. Pucinski was the Chairman of the General Subcommittee on Education of the House Committee on Education and Labor.)

I think it's an important point, and one which has not generally been remarked upon recently, and that is that if you look at education in the broad context of the interests of the Congress, you find that the Congress was much more progressive than the Presidency. That is to say, in 1966-67, certainly '68, the Congress was willing to do more than the President was. Then, the President had to worry about budgets. He had to worry about "fiscal responsibility." He had to worry about the state of the economy, etc. But the Congressional committees dealing with education in both the House and the Senate are not typical committees. They are "spenders." They are, Democrats and Republicans alike, quite liberal, progressive, in the sense of wanting more legislation. They want to spend more money. So they were "gung ho" throughout this period. And much of the efforts of the Johnson Administration including the efforts of Mr. Gardner, for example, in 1966, were designed to slow the Congress down, to turn back money, to deny the need for additional authorization and additional legislation. So that it is not correct, as many people have assumed, that Mr. Johnson was able to extract all of these things from an unwilling Congress. Rather he was the great trainmaster, the great engineer, and

locomotive operator in '64-'65, but by '66 the Viet Nam war and other domestic needs--such as the Model Cities Program--had really pushed education, if not into a back seat, at least into a second row seat. As I said, much of our effort then was directed at restricting new authorizations, at least major new authorizations.

M: Can you give me an example?

H: The record will show, for example, that in 1966 when the Congress, particularly the Senate, took up the extension of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which had been enacted just for one year in '65, the Senate wanted to triple or quadruple the authorizations for ESEA. And the House more than doubled that. And a great deal of effort on the part of Mr. O'Brien and Director Schultz at the Budget Bureau and all of our office--Mr. Gardner certainly--was to try to persuade the Congress to slow down and not to authorize these huge sums of money, but rather to be more "prudent" and to have different priorities, etc. So however you want to express it, the Congress could not really fairly be described as a recalcitrant body whipped into some sort of obedience and subservience by the President.

You know there was much talk prior to the elections of 1966--the Congressional elections--about a rubber stamp Congress. But one Congressman, I think, more accurately portrayed the situation when he said, "It's really a rubber stamp President. We pass all these bills, and then he doesn't have any backbone at all up there in the White House--he signs them all!" And I would say that to a very large extent, that characterization is at least as accurate as the rubber stamp Congress characterization.

M: Do you have any impression of Wilbur Mills?

H: No, I did not work with Wilbur Mills. I do know that, with regard to education, he was and is a great believer in vocational education, libraries, education of the disadvantaged. In the struggle over the Quie amendments to redesign the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, he and other Southerners apparently were quite eager to clip the wings of Commissioner Howe and to give more power to the States. He worked closely with Mrs. Green of Oregon, the chief state school officers, and the NEA to bring about the so-called Green amendments to the ESEA which were vigorously opposed by Secretary Gardner and by Commissioner Howe. So, to the extent, he was not a great supporter of the internal operations of the Johnson programs

But here's a good point to make. Again, the White House, I had the impression, was most concerned with whether there should be an ESEA or not, and what the levels of funding should be. But I don't think the White House--that is to say, the President of the United States and his top staff--ever much cared whether there was a state-plan program or a project grant approach or this kind of a set-aside or that kind. In this kind of a situation, it was possible for an influential person like Mr. Mills to be for the ESEA, but against the Administration position--at least the Administration position as represented by the Budget Bureau, the Secretary, Mr. Howe and so on.

M: You're also in a position, being a political scientist, to evaluate the value, the efficiency, of task forces. Are these useful?

H: I think that task forces are a fascinating subject. There is an article about to appear by Norman Thomas of the University of Michigan. I participated in commenting upon that article.

M: When will this appear?

H: I do not know. Professor Thomas is at the University of Michigan. He's a political scientist. I understand he's collaborating with someone who is also a political scientist and who's writing up the housing task forces.

Task forces have been a useful instrument for getting additional ideas that might not have come up through the regular planning process. They are useful for bringing in new people and for selling them on the thrust and the general direction of the Administration. But the task forces were not, to my way of thinking, as effective as they might have been because the papers were not distributed widely enough within the Administration so that staffers could benefit from them, could learn from them, could modify their own thinking.

The usual process was to get a task force and say, "The sky's the limit. Think big! Money no object! Just go ahead and tell us what you want." So the task force would produce a paper of thirty or forty pages or a hundred and forty pages which was then not read by the Califanos, generally, but was boiled down to one-and-a-half pages of summary of a summary of a summary of what this task force wanted.

Then the Gardners, the Howes--and I was present at a couple of these types of meetings--would get together and look at these summaries and would make rather snap judgments as to whether to do this or to do that on the basis of a summary of a summary. Several of the task force papers themselves were kept secret even from Secretary Gardner and from people such as myself who had to try to translate the rhetoric and the prose of a task force report into a working bill.

And so much of the educational impact was lost. There was a great deal of paranoia about secrecy and leaks and quite frequently, we had the impression--we were in fact told--that if the reports leaked out exactly what was recommended by the task force would not be done because the President would not do anything that was revealed in the papers. Whether this was true or not, that impression was created. And there was such excessive secrecy that I think the task forces did not adequately serve their purpose.

Also, you know, they greatly antagonized the relationships with the constituencies who felt left out, who didn't have a chance to participate. They didn't know who was on the task force. And there was all the talk about the "ins" and the "outs" and the Establishment and the New Establishment and the New, New Establishment. So there is in my mind a moot question as to whether the task forces were worth all that the propaganda support of them claimed.

Again, they did come up with some ideas, but generally and in rather broad, fuzzy terms. It was the job of the technicians and the specialists back in the departments to try to translate these terms into a piece of legislation or into an administrative proposal that could be meaningful.

M: I would take from your remarks that the secrecy was unnecessary and damaging.

H: I think that the secrecy was overdone, yes. To put it another way, if you were on a task force in 1967 looking at a particular problem, you would perhaps have heard by the grapevine that just ten months earlier there had been a task force, which, among other things, had looked at the same peoblem, say, problems in higher education. You were not able to get that task force paper, so you had to start over de novo, acting as if the world

had just been created, stretching your brains, coming up with new ideas and gimmicks. Thus, I think there was insufficient, if you will, cross-fertilization, insufficient sharing of experience and ideas.

Even when a task force comes up with a proposal that is not economically or politically feasible, there is an educational value to be gained by sharing that task force report at least with the top policy-makers in the Department. They could learn from it. It would help their own thinking; and then the next time around, you start from a higher base rather than starting all over from scratch. But the reverse was typical with the education task forces.

Of course, there were many different types of task forces. As you know, there were task forces consisting entirely of outsiders, outsiders from government. Then there were the mixed task forces--insiders and outsiders. And there were also interagency task forces just with government members. I think each of these performed a useful function. If you ask me to choose whether we should have done it exactly the way we did it or not to do it at all, I would have said, "Let's do it the way we did it." On balance I think it was a net increment, but it was not a well-run operation. The people at the top were able to use these task forces to get some jazzy ideas and to ratify their own preferences, but I do not think that the substance, most of the time, matched those jazzy ideas.

M: Is the task force then a useful political instrument?

H: Properly used, properly organized, properly staffed, properly disseminated--yes, very definitely.

M: You get the impression from newspapers and magazine articles, etc., that in the realm of education the civil rights issue--integration,

segregation, separation, whatever you want to call it--has been one of the major issues. Is this correct?

H: There's no question about it. Mr. Keppel and Mr. Howe and Mr. Gardner were conspicuously identified with the cause of desegregation. There's no question that in terms of their efforts, their time, their energies, much went into this struggle that might have gone into other parts of education, but they felt desegregation had the highest priority. There's no question that much of our support was eroded because we lost the support of people who couldn't go along with us on desegregation. There was great fear and misunderstanding. The record of the federal government's public information program was not as good as it might have been. There's no question that much of our legislation suffered. I referred earlier to the fact that, in my opinion, much of the reason why federal powers were clipped and reduced in 1967 in Title III of the ESEA and Title V of the ESEA was that many people were so bruised in the South by what they considered to be Mr. Howe's policies on desegregation that they retaliated by taking away as much discretion as they could from the Commissioner of Education.

There's no question in my mind that the Department of HEW lost some appropriations as a result of its commitment to, and occupation with, desegregation. Nevertheless, this was <u>the</u> priority, and it is something that I think was unavoidable given the leadership commitments of the people at the helm in OE and HEW, commitments I certainly supported, although my day-to-day responsibilities usually lay elsewhere.

I would like to say, since we're talking about the Johnson Administration, that I often heard Mr. Howe say that it is an untold story that

Mr. Johnson gave him complete backing directly and indirectly during all this period. When the heat on Mr. Johnson was very hot and very heavy from Southern governors and politicans generally Mr. Johnson did not waiver and did not order Mr. Howe, for example, to back off. Now, this is all second-hand, but I think it's important to mention at this important time in our history.

M: Can I conclude from that then that the policy for desegregation in education came from the White House--from the President?

H: I don't always know where things begin. The policy began in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The efforts made to enforce it were made by men in HEW and in Justice, and they were backed up by the White House. So I wasn't talking so much about the initiation of the policy and the interpretation of Title VI and the interpretation of what the Supreme Court had done as much as the backing which was given to it by the White House.

I'm sure that the general view in much of the country is that the White House did not really back desegregation vigorously, and I suppose you could argue that they didn't. But given another situation, given another set of hypotheses--and again, what I'm trying to reflect is my hearsay about the feelings of Commissioner Howe, for example, and Secretary Gardner--I would say that the White House did give a great deal of support in a very difficult situation.

M: Are the current moves against big city school systems, such as the Republican move against the school system in Houston--did these originate during your period of time? Was the preparation for this then?

H: I have to say that I know extremely little about the administration of the Civil Rights Act and the desegregation guidelines. Obviously, whatever is being done in the desegregation area by Mr. Finch and his associates was done as a result of the workings of the administrative proceedings. In other words, much of this has been in the pipeline for many, many months. I cannot tell you if Mr. Cohen would have acted in precisely the same way, or differently.

M: You've mentioned that you had recorded a great deal of information about the legislative history. I don't know what you recorded so that puts me at a disadvantage. I can ask you an open-ended question though. Can you think of anything that you did not put in there that you want to comment about?

H: That's certainly open-ended all right. It's so open-ended it's very difficult to focus. No, not at this moment. I would be willing to sit with anyone who wanted to back up that interview and ask specific questions and try to bring it more into focus. But having spent several hours with that recording, it's very difficult to know where to get in.

M: Perhaps we should wait until either I see it or someone else, and then follow it up from there rather than get into it on this interview.

H: I would volunteer this. I do not know, and I wasn't high enough up the ladder to know, just how much the President knew about the inner-workings of his education bills; how much he knew about the substance of what it was that his Administration was doing. I'm sure he had a general notion. One of the hallmarks, for example, of the Johnson education program, and indeed of the Great Society, is its overriding concern for the disadvantaged--whether the handicapped, or the Indians, or the migrants, or the poor.

But how much he knew about Title III and Section 8 and this and that, I do not know.

M: How much should he know?

H: Ideally, one would have hoped that he would have had alternatives put before him. "We can do the strengthening of state departments this way and that way. The arguments for it are such-and such. The arguments against it are thus and so." I don't believe that by-and-large these kinds of alternatives were put to him, and maybe it's just simply impossible.

But the point I wanted to make is that given that probability, namely that he did not know too much about the internal workings of the programs and had to rely upon the good judgment of the Cohens and the Gardners and the Hoews and the Califanos and the Caters--given that probability, what can you say about the Johnson Administration's leadership! Many people say, "Well, it would have happened without him anyway because of all the Democrats in the Congress as a result of Mr. Goldwater's candidacy and overwhelming rejection."

In my own mind the great contribution of the Johnson Administration is that he put education near or at the top of his domestic agenda. He could have, perhaps, put other types of issues at the top of this agenda, and then we would not have seen the progress that we did. But the fact that ESEA, for example, became the first major domestic bill in 1965, and that it became law in one day less than three months is an unheralded achievement--unprecedented anyway. That's the kind of leadership that the President gave to education. He just made it clear to everyone from the Congress on down to the people through-out the country that certainly

he was able to "turn out", if you will, the Cohens and the Howes and the Gardners by his dedication to education and to health and to other social welfare programs. And that to me is the great legacy of the Johnson Administration--its identification of education as a priority rather than the particular composition of the programs.

M: Do you suspect that that perhaps is about all a man being President of the United States can do?

H: No. I wouldn't let Mr. Johnson off that easily. As much as he worked, and we all have read and heard about the fabulous reports of his long working days and the like, I can't avoid the feeling from my somewhat parochial, and yet detached, view that it would have been better to perhaps to have had less quantity, but to have had more work, more detail, more thoughtfulness, more philosophical underpinning, and possibly more direct Presidential involvement. Now that's all as seen from the bottom looking up. I'm sure that when one looks at the fantastic work days and so on, one can excuse and explain the situation.

M: One last question. About the transition to Nixon, what did you do?

H: The transition in HEW was an incredible time. It was an incredible event. From the President on down, there was enormous good will and cooperation estended. I worked, and my boss worked, perhaps as hard during that period as any other time. My boss, by the way, was ill a good period of that time. But we prepared fact books for the new Secretary. I was and, even to this day, am still consulting with the new Administration on the phone and in meetings. I had a modest role in choosing my successor at HEW. I gave the new people lists of candidates that they might look

at--Republicans, able people that I thought could hold the jobs, not only a job but the job as well. We drew up position books. I participated with my boss in the briefing of Mr. Finch and his advisory committee, in late December, I believe, made up a series of documents which we handed over to them, and in general provided written information, solicited and gratuitous advice, potential appointees, etc.

M: You are impressed then with the amicable transition?

H: Yes, I think it was an incredible kind of an arrangement.

M: And then you left to set up the Educational Staff Seminar?

H: That's correct. This is an organization funded by the Ford Foundation through George Washington University which involves me in kind of an in-service training of Congressional staff people, Budget Bureau examiners, and people who did the kind of work I did in HEW, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, Executive and Legislative Branch, Appropriations Committees, and authorizing committees. We take these people out in a group to look at schools and colleges and see what's going on in America; try to find out more about education as seen by the teachers and the parents and the kids themselves, things that can't ordinarily be seen by staying in Washington.

M: This would seem to be a rather unusual organization.

H: It's unusual because it's simple. It's very simple and unsophisticated. What we try to do is get these guys out of town so that they can learn more. We also bring in controversial speakers, interesting speakers, so we can talk with them off the record about what's going on in education. For example, our first dinner speaker is the new Commissioner of

Education, James Allen, and we have invitations out to other people who can hopefully stretch our minds and help us understand more.

M: May I ask you how big your organization is?

H: The organization is just myself and my secretary, but the people we invite are fifteen to thirty people, depending on the event.

M: Very good. I wish to thank you for the interview.

H: It was a pleasure.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Dr. Sam Halperin

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Samuel Halperin, 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 terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

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 Samuel Halperin

Date March 5, 1971

Accepted Harry X. Middleton - for
Archivist of the United States

Date February 20, 1975

Preparation of "Gift of Personal Statement"

A. If you do not wish to impose restrictions on the use of your tape and transcript and if you do not feel the need to retain literary property rights upon the material, please sign the enclosed statement and return it to the Oral History Project.

B. If you wish to restrict the use of your transcript for a period of time beyond the date of the opening of the Johnson Library, a new statement will be prepared (either by you or by us) deleting paragraph 2 and substituting the following, with one of the alternatives:

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,

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for a period of _____ years or until _____ years after the death of the donor, whichever occurs later

be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it.

C. If you wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service engaged in performing normal archival work processes, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

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.

D. If you do not wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

This restriction shall not apply to 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.

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E. If a restriction that extends beyond your lifetime is to be imposed in paragraph 2, the following paragraph (appropriately numbered) will be completed and added to the end of the "Gift of Personal Statement":

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or

The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.