INTERVIEWEE: BERTRAND M. HARDING (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: STEVE GOODELL

November 25, 1968

G: Sir, earlier in this interview you mentioned that Mr. Boutin, whom you replaced, had had certain difficulties, and was dissatisfied with some aspects in the arrangement of his job. After you came on as Deputy Director, what was your relationship with Mr. Shriver?

H: I think the relationship with Shriver was very good, very satisfying, at least from my viewpoint. And I think from his. It was never a close personal relationship. Shriver operated with a small group of inside people--people that he had been associated with for some period of time largely, and people who were of his particular bent, very imaginative, very humorous, very light and gay. I didn't fit into that particular category, so on a personal basis it was very friendly, it was very sincere. He seemed to always be open and honest with me; and I of course always tried to be with him. And I was very satisfied with the relationship. But it was not the sort of relationship that he had, for example, with people like Ed May or Bookbinder, Herb Cramer, others, that he had a very close, almost a twenty-four hours a day relationship. I did not have that. I had an official and I think very warm, but professional relationship.

G: Did you experience any of the same problems that Mr. Boutin faced?

H: No, I can't really say I did, at least as I understood Boutin's problems, which were just as he related them to me.

G: Why did Mr. Shriver leave OEO?

H: I think he was tired. He had taken an awful buffeting, particularly when he was holding down both the Peace Corps and the OEO job. He

had been under great pressures almost on a continuing basis. I think he felt he had perhaps gotten a little sour in the job and that it would be good for him to leave. When he discussed it with him, as I understand it, the President told him that he would be happy to have him in almost any capacity in his Administration, specifically talked to him about a couple of Ambassadorships and the French one, I think, appealed to Sarge more than anything else and he eventually took it.

G: Did he leave you any parting shot, any instructions, recommendations, words of advice?

H: Not really. We had some conversations before he left mostly about specific problems that were on hand. As a matter of fact, it was assumed when he left that whereas I had been designated as the Acting Director at the time that he departed, it was assumed that there would be a regular full-time Director appointed. Unfortunately that did not occur, and has not occurred now for about nine months.

G: Since he has been in France, has he been in touch with you?

H: We've exchanged a couple of letters, and he was back over for the Kennedy funeral and I saw him briefly at that time.

G: Was there any discussion relating to OEO?

H: Yes. The meetings and the correspondence were very brief; the last communication I had from him was one of congratulations in connection with our 1969 appropriation which was somewhat larger than we'd had the previous year, and he was very kind about the work that had gone into getting that appropriation, and that was the sum total of that particular exchange.

G: Again, I'd like to turn back to 1967. In that year then-Congressman Goodell made the charge that OEO had indulged in certain illegal lobbying practices. Could you comment on his charge?

H: I don't remember Goodell's specific charge. That's a charge that has been made against this agency by many including Congresswoman Green and Senator Morse, Senator Dominick and others. Certainly not to my knowledge have we engaged in any illegal lobbying activities. There has been developed within the general confines of this program a large number of civilian outside groups, the women, the churches, the labor unions, others who are interested in this program. They are related to us through advisory commissions generally; these people have a very deep and a very personal interest in the program. When anything happens that is adverse to the program, they mount the podium and start writing letters and attempt to influence the Congress. I don't think this is an illegal activity. The only illegal activity that I know of was one young ill-advised staff member at one point sent a wire to a mayor asking him to make some sort of intercession, and this was an improper action. But I think the reason for the allegations is that we do have a well-developed clientele that react rather rapidly in most situations.

G: Nothing developed then from his accusations?

H: No, nothing at all that I know of ever developed.

G: As I recall, OEO in a sense said, "Put your money where your mouth is."

H: As I recall, the Goodell objection was not illegal lobbying, but just the fact that Shriver undertook sort of a personal public relations effort, and a rather tremendous one, as a matter of fact,

in connection with getting the authorization bill passed.

G: Over a hundred witnesses testified.

H: Yes. And Shriver was bombarding the Congress and everybody else with information--positive information--about the program. And Goodell resented this. I'm very fond of the Senator from New York, but I think his problem was that he had been attacking this agency and when Mr. Shriver very properly in his administrative capacity started a counterattack, Mr. Goodell and Mr. Quie didn't like it. There was nothing illegal about it, and in my view, does not constitute lobbying. It constitutes normal PR activity of a federal agency. And Shriver was undoubtedly one of the best instruments in carrying on a program of that sort that I've ever known.

G: What is your own opinion of the opportunity crusade which was sponsored by Goodell and Quie?

H: I really never analyzed it carefully enough to have a particularly intelligent opinion on it. I think it was largely an effort to rename the program that was underway, and put some of the activities out on contract that were otherwise in-house. I think there was some fiscal legerdemain involved in which he was proposing to cut the price appreciably and get the same results. And I think that those, upon analysis by the staff, those reductions in costs were largely imaginary. Let me say though that I think that both Quie and Goodell, within the Republican party, are among the strongest supporters of the concepts which OEO stands for.

G: Goodell seems to be very, very strong in Community Action.

H: That's right.

G: Particularly in participation of the poor in the program.

H: That's right. And he just recently made a statement as a matter of fact along those lines that I just read in the press within the last couple of days. He said he felt that the Nixon Administration, whereas the idea of tax credits for example were perhaps very desirable, that anybody was deluding himself if he thought he could do all of this in that indirect fashion; that there still had to be strong social programs such as those being administered by this agency. So Mr. Goodell is not really an enemy at all.

G: He would therefore find himself in opposition to the members of his own party and on that committee.

H: Yes.

G: Do you have any knowledge at all of the Shriver-Adam Clayton Powell relationship when he was chairman of the House Committee on Education?

H: It was stormy is my best recollection of it. Sometimes on and sometimes off. Powell at one point as I recall called for Sarge's resignation, it was during the period when Powell was--

G: Making the specific charge that he was a bad administrator.

H: Yes, that's right. However, in the beginning Powell had been rather supportive of Shriver and OEO. Most of this occurred before I came on the scene, so I have no first-hand knowledge. I met Mr. Powell only once before he left the Congress, so I don't have any good background in that area.

G: Does OEO develop relationships with members of the pertinent House and Senate committees?

H: Oh, of course we do.

G: In what ways?

H: Well, we call on them. The Director and the chief members of the

staff call on them; we attempt to--we send our Congressional liaison people over to frequently check on what may be bothering them; we're almost immediately responsive to their requests within reasonable limits. Of course, we try to develop relationships with them and with key members of the Appropriations Committee for obvious reasons. This is the way the two branches of government relate to each other.

G: OEO has been called one of the most over-investigated agencies in government. Why has that been?

H: I think in the beginning--in the first place of course, it was a very controversial concept. It was also viewed as a potential source of great fraud; many examples of fraud of course occurred in WPA and in the other early New Deal agencies, and I think the Congress perhaps with justification felt that this was a--and particularly the Republicans--that this was an opportunity for a great deal of mal-administration and perhaps dishonesty. And therefore, there were frequent forays from various staffs on the Hill, GAO, FBI, etc. to look into our activities. Fortunately for the agency, perhaps even because of this exposure, the agency has been very careful particularly in elements of misuse of funds. We have made extensive use of audit of the grantees; and there has been relatively little fraud compared to what I would have anticipated.

G: What is the nature of the connection between OEO and the FBI? Does OEO use the FBI?

H: Not really. Our relationship is normally that they refer information that they pick up about various situations to us; and of course where we have an indication of criminal fraud of one sort or another it is turned over to the Department of Justice and they would bring the FBI

into it if they felt it necessary.

G: If OEO were to discover, for example in the local Community Action agency--take Newark for example; if militants with shady reputations were to become involved in the program, what kind of policy do you follow then?

H: Well, we have our own investigative organization with OEO, and if these allegations are made, we would typically send an investigator in to try to ferret out the situation and report his findings back to us. The investigative staff which we have contains a lot of ex-FBI agents--

G: This is in the Office of Inspection?

H: In the Office of Inspection, that's right, and very qualified investigators. So we can conduct an FBI-type of investigation within-house.

G: Mr. Harding, if I can turn to another criticism--Some of the Republican criticism, especially in the early years of OEO, focused on the charge that war on poverty was a handout effort. How much Congressional opposition stems from a kind of ideological predisposition which opposes the basic concepts underlying the war on poverty?

H: I think a great deal of it does. And it's predicated upon a misconception either on the part of the Congressman or more particularly on the part of his constituents which he does not have the opportunity to thoroughly investigate. Among my own friends, for example, the idea is quite prevalent that this is an agency that's passing out $2,000,000,000 a year in gratuities. And it's awfully hard to get across to many people, and hence to the Congress, that this is not the name of the game in OEO, but it is a very frequently

misunderstood concept and accounts, I think, for a lot of the antagonism and criticism.

G: In Evans and Novack's book, Lyndon B. Johnson, Exercise of Power, they relate the story that Mr. Helms, who became Director of the CIA, when he heard of the effort that was going to be made in the war on poverty said something to the effect that if he had any relatives who were in poverty, he would just recommend they go out and get a job. Does this kind of attitude permeate bureaucracy or people in government, as well as in Congress?

H: I don't think that the incidents of this sort of attitude is as great within the bureaucracy than it is in within the general population, because I think the bureaucracy is better informed than the general public, in spite of what people think about bureaucrats. It's there of course. Obviously there are those who believe in the slogan of "I fight poverty; I work," sort of thing. But I think within the bureaucracy that's a relatively small percentage, and that most of them appreciate the social problem that we're trying to combat.

G: Some comment has also been made on the confusion in the public mind on the relationship between the war on poverty and the civil rights movement, and there has been some confusion in terms of purposes and goals and method. Could you comment on that? Has OEO made any conscious attempt to differentiate between the two?

H: Well, we see the two very deeply entwined with each other. The denial of civil rights is an undoubted factor in a certain portion of the causes of poverty, and therefore we differentiate; that is, we are not a civil rights organization--we have no civil rights responsibilities as such, but we recognize the need for supporting people who are engaged in

civil right activities. And of course many times these are one and the same people; the work of SCLC in the South has a direct effort both in terms of breaking down racial barriers and in terms of pulling the Negro out of poverty. So they're involved, entwined, one with the other; our responsibility is primarily economic and social, and the civil rights worker is political, but we do not consciously try to carry out a role in the civil rights area although we're obviously very predisposed in that direction.

G: That may preempt my next question. Another charge that I think the New Republic has made is that OEO was running a fire Brigade operation, as they call it; that is, during the summers they put most of their energies and weight and money into summer programs in the ghettos to help prevent summer riots. Is there any validity to that charge?

H: We have put a great deal of money over the last three summers into summer programs. There has been much discussion within the agency and without the agency as to whether this is a proper role for us to play. It has been a role which this Administration has wanted us to play, and I don't see anything inherently wrong in it. The idea of affording poor people, particularly poor teenage youth, an opportunity to do something in the summer other than sit on the street corner or inhabit the local bar seems to me to be a reasonable program. Not, I would say, a high priority program, but a reasonable program, for an anti-poverty agency to be engaged in. Officially, we do not consider ourselves an anti-riot program. But the summer program and the programs that the CAPS have carried out in the ghettos in the summer, I think have made a measurable contribution towards at least relative peace in the cities during those tense periods. I

would not like to see us degenerate into nothing but a bucket brigade operation, but our efforts have had some cooling effect on city problems.

G: Earlier in this interview I asked you about the impact of the Viet Nam war, particularly in terms of OEO expenditures and the budget. In April of 1967 Martin Luther King in a speech--critical speech in terms of his own career--described the war in Viet Nam as the enemy of the poor, that the anti-poverty program was broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle plaything of a society gone mad on war. Do you have any comment on that, or do you know what Shriver's response to that speech might have been?

H: I don't recall Shriver's response to the speech; as a matter of fact, I don't even recall the speech at this point of time.

G: It seemed to have the implication that he was calling on OEO's own constituency, the poor, to pppose the war in Viet Nam.

H: Well of course this has been a very serious problem in the civil rights area and in the poverty area. There has been a great deal of confusion and conflict about the role of such groups vis-a-vis Viet Nam. We have of course obviously tried to keep above and beyond that sort of conflict, and the agency has no view that Viet Nam is the cause of the problems of the agency, fiscal or otherwise. So I just don't remember the situation regarding King's statement. But the general situation of identity between anti-poverty, pro-civil rights, and anti-Viet Nam positions is a historical fact.

G: Did either you or Shriver have any contact with Dr. King before his death?

H: Shriver had considerable contact with King before his death, but I

never had any contact.

G: Do you know if there was any discussion about the forthcoming Poor People's Campaign?

H: I'm quite certain that there was no discussion--I know there was not with me, and I'm almost certain there was no discussion with Shriver prior to the time that he left.

G: Did you have any meetings or conferences with Reverend [Ralph] Abernathy during the Poor People's Campaign?

H: I had two meetings scheduled with Reverand Abernathy during the campaign; both of these were held with Andy Young, his deputy, rather than with Abernathy. And on one occasion I visited Resurrection City and met with Andy Young down there. I did not come into personal contact with Abernathy during the campaign.

G: OEO responded sympathetically to the Poor People's Campaign. Would you encourage this kind of activity; do you see this is helpful to the cause of the poor in terms of organizing them and dramatizing their plight?

H: I think that's such a mixed bag that I just don't know, and it may be decades before we're really able to judge whether on balance it was a very intelligent thing to do or a very stupid thing to do. I'm very ambivalent about it. I can see it in one perspective where it did dramatize. I can see it in another perspective where it sickened people who were otherwise supportive, and threw people across the line who were sort of in a middle-of-the-road position; and I just don't think I'm bright enough at this point in time to make a sort of global judgment as to what the overall value was.

G: They picketed here, didn't they?

H: Yes. They were in front of our building a couple of times.

G: What was the tangible result of that? Was there any?

H: Of the picketing?

G: Yes, in front of OEO.

H: Well, there was no tangible result of the picketing, because we've been picketed by almost everybody. That was not an issue. We did have a written statement of demands placed before us; we did have two rather large meetings here in the building with the leadership and with members of the campaign--

G: This was with Andy Young?

H: Yes, Andy Young was leading the group at the time, and Hosea Williams was with him on the second occasion. We did reallocate some money at the end of the fiscal year that is, last fiscal year, particularly to augment the emergency food and medical programs, and also to put a few additional dollars into Mississippi Head Start. These may very well have come about even without the campaign, but there was perhaps some cause and effect relationship there. We did agree, and we are in the process even now of trying to work out a system by means of which increased numbers of poor uneducated people can be worked in as sub-professionals into the OEO operation. These were the main things, but I don't think that--obviously we, unlike other departments, of goverment--we were in the business of trying to assist these people and their causes. And so there was not much more beyond what we were already trying to do that we could undertake to do to accede to their demands.

G: Why did they choose to picket--or to demonstrate in front of OEO instead of going for example to the Congressmen who had been responsible

for cutting back appropriations?

H: Well, of course, they did demonstrate. They demonstrated in front of Wilbur Mills' apartment, as I recall; they demonstrated over on the Hill; they demonstrated in front of the Supreme Court Building; they spent most of their effort and most of their time, and most of the problems were over at the Department of Agriculture. We had a strange relationship to the thing. It was almost as though they felt an obligation to object and to make some sort of a public record against the agency that was charged with doing something about their problem, and I guess the psychology of this was that there was still poverty and in some sort of strange perverted sense, you could say that this agency was responsible for there still being poverty in America. And so you had to make this known before this agency.

Actually our relationship with them was really rather good, almost in the nature of a charade in which they would advise in advance that they were going to come over and talk about various things and send us a list of questions, and we would have private conversations with their counsel and with their leadership about what we could do and what we couldn't do. For example on the additional money in the Mississippi Head Start, we intentionally held it up for a few days in order to let them get credit for the allocation. So it was acrimonious on the surface but not really fundamentally acrimonious. They have objections about the way we work of course, and about the programs and about the lack of funding for programs; I think the leadership at any rate is knowledge-able enough to realize that most of those objections are

matters beyond our control, so there was not any real deep antagonism, but it was a sort of a surface game that we were playing.

G: You said that perhaps the same results might have happened had they not demonstrated or had they not presented you with a list of demands?

H: Yes, I think that's a fair statement.

G: Again, earlier in this interview you mentioned that you had had one phone call only from the President since you have become Acting Director, and I didn't asked you then what the President had said to you. What did he say?

H: He was asking about our programs for auditing grantees. Something had come to his attention indicating some sort of problem with the misapplication of funds on the part of the grantee, and he was motivated to call and ask me to put increasing emphasis on audit of grantees. This was prior, as I recall, to his announcement on March 31 that he was not going to run. Was it March 31?

G: I don't remember.

H: Well, whatever date it was that he announced--it had to be later than that--Well, under any circumstances--Prior to that time I heard what he was saying to me as being an indication that he was entering a political race and he wanted everything as clean as he possibly could have it so he was pushing us to increase the audit emphasis, as we did.

G: This seems to have been his primary concern after the launching of the program; that the Administration be clean, that the program be run well, that there are no drastic unfortunate political repercussions. Is that a fair assessment?

H: Yes, I think that's very fair. He has always been very concerned about it, because I think in part he remembers some of the bad press that some of the New Deal agencies had, and he wanted the objectives of the program, but he did not want obviously--and none of us wanted--the adverse reaction that you can get from defalcation.

G: Could you tell me whether the Bureau of the Budget, in your dealings with the Bureau of the Budget--have they ever interfered with OEO policy since you've been Acting Director?

H: Oh, yes.

G: Could you be specific?

H: Well, I'm not sure that we're using the same words together. Interfered in the sense that they do, and I think it not improper--they influence, they affect, they even direct agency policy in all agencies, not just this agency. It's naive to assume that the Bureau merely sits up there and computes the costs necessary to carry out programs which the agencies put before them, because that's just not true. I guess one of the classic examples is a great disputation that we've had with the Bureau of the Budget over the last two or three years on the emphasis to be placed on summer Head Start as opposed to full-year Head Start. The Bureau has taken a very strong position, they forced it down the agency's throat, causing us to put more resources into summer Head Start than we would have put, or than which the local communities would put. We've had great differences of opinion with them on the Job Corps, the problems of size and mix and so forth. So they get very much into agency policy. And as I say, I don't really think this is improper. To the extent that they represent the arm of the President; they're properly in that business.

G: If they're properly in the business, then what kind of a relationship

do you have with the White House staff?

H: It's the same sort of relationship really. In many cases the differences of this sort between the Bureau and the agency have to be reconciled in the White House, occasionally by the President himself. I have not had any issues that I've taken to the President, but Shriver took our budget mark to the President on a couple of occasions, and other issues.

G: If the Bureau of the Budget does make its influence known to OEO on other than financial matters--budgetary considerations, they do deal--I think it was back in '65, as early as '65, where the BOB had become involved with Community Action boards and the representation of the poor. I don't recall the specific circumstances, but they were involved in that and were making their influence known in OEO. Well, if it isn't financial, if it isn't budgetary, what grounds--what justification do they have? You say, they're the right arm of the President.

H: Well, there's hardly anything--any policy--that does not have a financial implication to it, and so they can make it the grounds. But they consider themselves really with a broader mandate than just putting a price tag on programs, is the point I'm making. They're making programmatic judgments, the relative value of one program versus another program; and they can carry out that judgment by the allocation of resources, and most particularly of funds--and personnel as well. So I see the role of the Bureau as being properly a broad programmatic management responsibility with shared responsibility with White House staff and ultimately of course issues that cannot be reconciled between those three parties, resolved by the President.

G: I see. I think it was Richard Boone that called the Bureau of the Budget the secret government.

H: Well, in a way they are. But somebody has to govern.

G: Is there any contact between OEO and the Council of Economic Advisers?

H: Yes, there's a certain contact on occasion between our Office of Research Planning and the Council, that being the office primarily where we have our economists; the most recent contact being disputation about some poverty figures where we, cooperatively with the Council, prepared a correction of a newspaper story that went to the President.

G: Is it the Council of Economic Advisers or OEO or both working together that determines the poverty criteria--the income dividing line?

H: The formula was set some time ago, and I think it was set cooperatively between OEO and the Council.

G: It changes from year to year though, doesn't it?

H: Yes, it changes. And that would be either the Department of Labor or the Council that would factor in the cost of living.

G: Do you know the present figure?

H: Well, the present figure is approximately $3,000 for a family of four.

G: $3,000.

H: For a family of four urban, non-farm. It's about $23-$2400 for a farm family.

G: Do you think this is an accurate figure?

H: I think it's terribly moderate. It's postulated on the assumption that the cost of a meal is 23¢, and all other expenses for an individual amount $1.40 a day; this multiplied out, as I say for a family of four--three meals a day for a family of four, plus

$1.40 for all other expenditures, housing, clothing, etc.--that is what comes to $3,000. I think that's quite sparse. So when we say we've got 26,000,000 people below the poverty line, I think we're understating the case if anything.

G: Could you pick a figure out of the air which would be more accurate?

H: No, I really couldn't, because the 23¢ thing comes from the economists who have studied what a person can actually just get by and live on for food; and I'm not an expert in that thing. It just seems awfully low to me.

G: I've personally lived under that, and I know that it depends on your background and how you live and so on and so on, but $3,000 seems to me to be not a very accurate--if you're shooting for this kind of an objective--OEO certainly doesn't shoot for that, does it? Shoots for a higher objective, doesn't it?

H: Well, at the moment we're shooting at that objective, yes. We're shooting at getting 26,000,000 people that are still below that level above that level. And I guess once you get them above that level, then you perhaps try to adopt a higher sight. But that's where we are at the moment.

G: Does OEO consult with its critics? For example, people like Moynihan or Sundquist or Harrington?

H: Yes, but not probably enough. It's usually when the critic raises some point we will ask him to come in and talk about it, but I don't think we go out enough and talk to those people either in the private sector or on the Hill. I think we'd do well to do a lot more consultation of that sort.

G: Related to that, how receptive or how flexible is the internal

organization of OEO to internal criticism?

H: I think it's very, very receptive. We've run sort of on a seminar type of operation so that people are hopefully in a position to say almost anything on their minds, there are no retributions taken. Shriver and I both have very thick skins on subjects of that sort; we've quite willing to talk about the problems. The one thing that I personally, and that he very much resents, were where our internal critics take their problems out into the public press and create an atmosphere of division within the agency which I think does very great harm. But in terms of just talking to the people--our employees who are critical of policies or procedures, I think we've got a very open system here.

G: That recalls to mind--I don't know whether it was before or after you came to the agency--there was some controversy over the Office of Public Affairs supposedly had made a fiat statement that all OEO people before talking to the press would be cleared and so on. What ever happened? Was that after you got here?

H: That was just almost immediately before I came, as I recall. There was a memo that Kramer, the then-public information officer, put out. Now his side of the story is that all he was trying to do was to maintain a continuity of knowledge as to what was being said to the press by everybody; the press picked it up as being some sort of a muzzling of employees so that they wouldn't talk to them. And I think it got worked out pretty well; it really involved primarily only one reporter on the New York Times, and I think that Kramer and the individual got their situation--

G: Mr. Kramer's remark, I think at the time, was that he was not the

thinking man's filter. Well again, related to this, as an administrator and in the context of part of the reason why you were brought to OEO, what is your view of the quality of OEO personnel? Are people attracted to the poverty program from a sense of idealism, an ideological commitment; and because of this, are they somewhat different from the normal Washington bureaucrat--that they might go off on their own way, they might not adhere to the normal channels and so on?

H: Yes, I think this is quite true. There's a greater incidence of intelligence, dedication, independence, imagination, in this agency than I guess any other organization I've ever been associated with; and that is of course a double-edged sword. It gives you great spontaneity, great verve, great activity, and sort of a climate in in the agency. On the other hand, it's a very hard thing to control. Unlike the normal Washington bureaucrat who, if he's a good one, will argue his point as hard as he can but once there has been a position taken by the agency he will loyally adhere to it. will loyally adhere to it. There are a relatively large number of people within this agency--at least there used to be, I think the number has decreased in recent years who, if they didn't like the decision, would fight it with every means possible including midnight discussions with newspapermen and inspire stories critical of the agency and of its administration. So it's both good and bad. But it typifies this agency and the sort of people that at least initially inhabited it.

G: In 1966 Shriver went to the Congress and said that we could abolish--the United States could abolish--poverty in ten years, and I would

assume that statement was based on the five-year plan which had been constructed in that year. Later Walter Heller, one of the early formulators of the anti-poverty effort, said that America should be ashamed if we did not plan at this goal. Has this objective changed in any way?

H: Has the objective changed?

G: Ten years, that it could be done if we had the commitment.

H: The computations that indicated that it could be done in ten years were made in good faith by good economists in which Heller either participated or at least subsequently reviewed and agreed to. So it was a feasible thing to do. That was over two years ago, so part of the ten years has elapsed without that sort of massive program being undertaken. And it would be a massive program. In terms of the agency's position we would still like to start down the road, whether it would take us ten years or twelve or fifteen or whatever. We would recommend to the President, have recommended to the President, will continue to recommend it as long as we are around to recommend, that the program be operated at a level which would bring us out at the end of the horn or something like the end of a horn within a reasonable period of time. So the objective is still there; we have not yet been able to put our foot on that road of large aggressive effort.

G: Do you think this country ever will?

H: I doubt it.

G: Why?

H: I think that the cost is so great, that we seem to be getting more conservative Congresses instead of more liberal Congresses. This

of course could change too. But I see concern, I see willingness to do it in a sort of middle-of-the-road way, and of course great inroads have been made along that line, but in terms of a massive sort of undertaking such as is characterized by a war where the country will get behind it and will do it with one mind, I have serious doubts that the country can bring itself, screw its courage to the sticking point, and make that sort of massive effort, bear that sort of taxation to carry out that sort of program. I would hope otherwise, but my frank opinion is that the chances--at least within my view of the future--of undertaking it are rather dim.

G: Just two short last questions. OEO, when it was constructed, in the original legislation it was charged and given the mandate with coordinating total anti-poverty effort. How successful has this been, and if it hasn't been successful, what could have been done?

H: It has not been successful. OEO has not been able to, for perhaps a multitude of reasons, serve as a coordinating--which is really sort of a controlling--role. At least two reasons occur to me. One is that in spite of the original concept of the Director being a special assistant to the President, in addition to his job as Director, that role never materialized. I don't know whether that was a function of just the dynamics of the situation or whether it was the chemistry between Lyndon Johnson and Sargent Shriver. But it never occurred. Any coordination that was accomplished was really accomplished by the Bureau of the Budget or by White House staff, not by this agency.

The second reason that it probably--regardless of what that chemistry might have been--is that the way we set ourselves up and began to do business, we became a competitor with the Department of

Labor, with HEW, with HUD, and others. And it's very difficult for one peer to coordinate the other. So I think perhaps it was conceptually wrong, and I think in terms of the individuals that were cast in the roles that it didn't and couldn't work.

What could be done--I think the agency ought to be relieved of the role of coordination; that that ought to be consolidated into a bigger coordinating role, and that is a coordination in a structured fashion across the whole domestic front, with a very heavy emphasis and continued pressure on the poverty side of it forcing the oldline agency to do more and more and more in support of this particular segment of the population. But I think the coordination, the overall management of the domestic side ought to be brought together in some mechanism, probably in the White House, almost necessarily in the White House, that would carry out that sort of role.

G: This would then involve the delegation of OEO operated programs then, wouldn't it?

H: Not necessarily. That could be part of such a package or not. OEO could continue operating everything it's operating, and its coordination role would go up above. Or it could delegate a lot of programs. It could maintain itself as an innovative operator, it could maintain itself as the spokesman for the poor within the federal council. There are lots of different configurations that might be undertaken, but I am convinced that without a rather substantial change in both the structure, the role, and the individuals involved, that the idea of OEO coordinating all of poverty is unrealistic. In addition to all of this, you see that there's a conflict, a basic conflict in the

assignment of that role. Mr. Weaver at HUD is supposed to coordinate all activities relative to urban affairs; Mr. Wirtz is supposed to coordinate all labor, manpower activities throughout the government; Mr. Cohen is supposed to do the same thing for health. All of these programs have very real impact on the poverty population. So unless you are a coordinator of the coordinators, it's a meaningless sort of assignment, because everything you're going to talk about that you're trying to coordinate--nearly everything--is going to be of an educational, health, housing, some other nature, and some other guy has been designated as the coordinator of all of those activities. So you're just chasing your tail around.

G: Have you ever expressed these views to anybody in the White House, the Bureau of the Budget?

H: Yes, I've expressed them to--never to the President, but to staff in the White House and to the Bureau of the Budget.

G: How far do they go?

H: Well, at this point of course I've expressed these views just really rather recently, and rather recently nobody in this Administration is going very far to doing anything, so it's very academic discussions at this point.

G: Then finally, I hate to kind of end on this particular question or this note, but how would you respond to the charge that is made over and over and over again, the rhetoric of the anti-poverty war has raised the expectations of the poor without providing for the means for fulfilling those expectations?

H: I think I would say that that allegation is true on a factual basis; that there has been much rhetoric; that there has been words such

unconditional war on poverty; abolish poverty by 1976. And the whole concept of a war on poverty in and of itself is a bit of rhetoric. Mrs. McNamara, who served on our National Advisory Council for several years, used to get almost apoplectic every time the expression was used because she felt it was not only misleading, but just bad psychology in talking about it in war terms. And we have this throughout the whole agency. Everything is a strategy of some sort or another, and we use that sort of jargon.

But in a larger and in a more philosophical sense, I don't think it has been an error to talk much and to continue to expose the total population to the problem. I think only out of an understanding that there is a very, very real problem are we ever going to have any movement at all towards its solution. So in a restricted sense we've talked more than we have delivered, but in a broader sense I think the talking and the publicity and the PR has awakened this nation to a very real problem that many, many did not even understand existed four or five years ago. And it's only through that awakening that we're going to be able to make progress. So whereas I am by nature not a PR type and believe much more in the muted sentence, I think that a great service has been done by people--real salesmen like Shriver who have gotten this idea across, awakened thousands and thousands of middle-class Americans to the need; and they've volunteered and they've given money and they've served on boards. The women have knocked themselves out, the churches; we have perhaps changed more institutions in the last four years than any other agency in the history of this country--the American Bar Association, the American Medical Association, labor unions--you can go through just

a whole litany of very fundamental organizations and groups within the society that have awakened to this thing and have become absolutely consumed in their interest in it. So I think it has been a tremendous step in the direction; it is unfortunate that the resources never came along to match the brave words, but I think they will come--they will not come in massive forms, as I've indicated, but I think we will continue to move in that direction. And I think in order to be able to continue at all, you had to have this understanding of the problem. And I think that's what the rhetoric has done.

G: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Harding.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Bertrand M. Harding

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, _____, 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 Bertrand M. Harding

Date 9/13/74

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

Date September 30, 1974