INTERVIEW III

DATE: August 19, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES M. MAGUIRE

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENY

PLACE: The National Archives Conference Room, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 3

Mc: Mr. Maguire, to continue with our third session this morning, Tuesday, August 19, at the National Archives Conference Room, I was asking you about some specific speeches. You were telling me just briefly that essentially it's rather hard to recall the specific ones, but you were kind of going over some in your mind. I wonder if you would tell me what you were thinking about either in terms of categories such as type or any specific ones that you recall.

M: Yes, it isn't the difficulty of recalling them as individual children; I'm just not sure what any extended discussion of them as separate speeches would add to to knowledge of the Johnson Presidency. To me they are all fused together in a kind of cohesive whole, including even such outwardly singular speeches as the State of the Unions of the various years.

Mc: Did you being preparing those State of the Unions very far in advance?

M: Yes, I suppose that was at one level the most organized of any presidential speech writing effort. I saw and was involved in the preparation of three of them. I tend to think that the bulk of organization tended to diminish from '65 through '68. There would be a rather intensive effort beginning in the Fall to gather together programmatic ideas. This in itself was a characteristic of the Johnson Presidency where the President did wish to put forward specific proposals in his State of the Union messages. As you know some Presidents have followed other habits, their

State of the Union messages being considerably softer. For our part in the cases where the State of the Union messages did present programs, this was in itself an operational mandate for the staff, the White House, the Executive Branch, the entire Administration to follow through. You can think of model cities, civil rights, beautification, pollution, certainly foreign policy goals were set forth in these messages, so in that respect they are of great and, most significantly, of enduring significance from year to year. They are in effect a dynamic, and you were very conscious of that when you were preparing the message. So some man, or men such as Califano, McPherson, Cater, Valenti in his day, certainly Rostow, George Christian, Bill Moyers very much so in his day, myself and some others would in effect point a vacuum cleaner at the country and suck up any and all ideas we could. Then there would be a natural filtering out process in terms of political realism, but from this intake we would wind up with perhaps a 40-page book of proposals, two-thirds of which could actually be a stated part of the State of the Union message. Others we would then launch in the form of presidential messages to Congress.

It's not a very exciting process. There is an enormous amount of effort involved. It can be legalistic rather than stylistic, the style part of the State of the Union messages not too surprisingly is usually left to the end. The President has a very large hand of course in the substance first, but also in the actual drafting of the message, perhaps more so in this instance of the State of the Union message than many others. Also, Mrs. Johnson regularly will read and review one of the many, many, many drafts. And also, the normal complement of outside trusted advisers will be called upon.

It should perhaps go without saying that no one man ever writes the State of the Union message. The history of the American presidency seems to bear that out. It is certainly true of our history. What you are, basically, is a group of consulting architects more than literary stylists.

Mc: Mr. Maguire, what about the March 31st speech and the sequence of events that led up to that, and then of course including that day?

M: I've read so many versions of it I don't even understand it myself anymore.

Sitting in the White House, I was on the periphery of a two-month operation, basically managed by Harry McPherson. This, as I remember it, was an effort to draft perhaps the most consequential statement of the Johnson Administration to that date. We would call for a Vietnam bombing pause. There were, I believe, some twenty-eight or thirty drafts of this message written. Each one was written in collusion with parties like Walt Rostow, Clark Clifford, Dean Rusk; the President had his own small set of advisers looking over these drafts as they would be presented over the period of this six weeks. It was a particularly exhausting time, I recall, for Harry McPherson.

The President, as was his habit in working with me on a project of this kind, would touch upon it in the evening in his office or mention it in another meeting or call and say something about a given paragraph on a certain page. That is what I mean by peripheral. I did not have control of that action, it belonged in Harry's office and I was simply there to help. It was a very closely guarded process.

Now, after some six weeks we arrived at a weekend at the end of March. The speech calling for the bombing halt was, we believed, locked up, but it was a very hairy situation all around. All that I knew was that we had television time booked for Sunday night.

I think I worked Saturday on some version of the speech. I suspect it was not the final version of that time, but the President had asked me to look over this particular version. And while I knew there was yet a more final version kicking around the White House corridors, the best thing you can do in those situations is to follow the President's instructions.

I forget what happened Saturday evening and Saturday night. I was at home on Sunday when the President called me himself and asked me to come in to the White House. I arrived somewhere in the late morning. I remember removing myself from my own office and sitting at Larry Temple's desk, which was one removed from the President's. We were gearing up for the usual last minute frenzy of getting the President ready for television, or so I thought. There did seem to be an unusually large number of people in the immediate presidential offices.

The President phoned me, and I remember he was rather upset that he could not reach me in my own office. He wanted to know what the hell I was doing in Larry Temple's office. But anyway, he asked me to go over to the Mansion into, I believe, the Lincoln Room--that's not right. It shows you how really busy you can get in the White House when you don't know the names of the rooms in the Mansion and you've been in and out of them a hundred times. I went into the large conference room off the center hall and found Horace Busby working at the long table with a yellow legal pad, and I must say my heart sank. Though seeing Buz in on speeches at the literal last moment was nothing at all new. But I knew that McPherson was not around, and I also knew that if there were any changes in what I thought was the bombing pause speech, I would be carrying the freight for McPherson.

Mc: Do you mean you took the sight of Horace Busby as meaning that a more conservative approach might be being applied to the speech?

M: No, I don't. This is one of the difficulties of dealing with individual speeches, they only make sense as you look upon them all as a whole. It was quite customary on major speeches for the White House staff to knock themselves out, do the best they could, calling on all the expertise they could, and then at the last minute have someone else, some intimate adviser of the President, run the fine-toothed comb over the text. There is nothing at all wrong with this; in fact, in many cases it is not only desirable but of great assistance. However, we were at the end of a frankly wearying and pummeling and punishing six weeks period. I am just being candid in recalling my own sense of perhaps unusual dismay, although that's too strong a word, at seeing this very long, very intricate speech at the last minute in the hands of yet another party. I don't want to go beyond that because it gets terribly political and personal.

Mc: Had the various versions that had developed over the six week period reflected different approaches?

M: Yes, but that's Harry McPherson's story and that, I suggest, is the real story. So far as I know Harry is the only man qualified to give the story, but it is a story that absolutely cannot be left out of the record. Every single draft was tooth and nail, many of them hammer and tong or hammer and claw. It was a very, very important speech.

So leaving the story of the actual six weeks of preparation to McPherson, I go back to the Mansion now on Sunday, March 31st, somewhere around noon, and to Horace Busby. I remember Buz shoved some yellow legal pages across the table to me. The first thing my eye fell on was a quote from President Kennedy. The first thing I said, rather hastily, was something

like, "Oh for God's sake, do we really need another quote!"

At that moment on the Sunday morning I was most concerned with the length of the speech. I had the responsibility, I was the only one in the White House with the responsibility to cut what I estimated to be something like three hundred to four hundred words. I had to do that for the simple reason that the President only had twenty-seven and a half to twenty-eight minutes of air time, and we had something like a thirty-five to thirty-six minute speech. This is, again, routine for my job.

It is Sunday. And as I later found, everybody was doing what they should be doing on Sunday. They were boating and golfing and playing tennis and taking their kids to church.

I remember Buzz did not even look up when I growled at the Kennedy quote; he simply kept his head down and said, "Read on." The only thing I remember next, as I did read, was the sound of my jaw falling on the table. I found that I was not reading anything that I had ever seen in the bombing pause speech, I was reading the President's withdrawal statement. It was the first I had seen of it, it was the first I had heard of it, and I was thoroughly and I suppose even bitterly disappointed.

I don't really remember contributing anything at all to those famous final, I think, two hundred and nineteen words. I don't really even know why the President asked me to go over and work with Buzz. It was a common enough assignment from him. The President did seem to rely on me at the last minute, but I had other fish to fry. I had a hard editing job to do on a major speech. Buzz is the compleat professional. So I suppose that what I did was to somehow work my way back to the West Wing and go to work on the main body of the text, cutting it to fit the television time.

Mc: Were you asked not to talk about this last part at all to anyone?

M: Yes.

Mc: By whom, and why, did they say?

M: I don't recall, it's just something that would have slipped by any White House staffer's consciousness because it was a fairly routine request. In fact, it was very routine. We had been locked up in considerable secrecy for six weeks on the main speech. In fact, large areas of it I was not privy to. One would have operational or managerial difficulty, for instance, in simply keeping up with the meetings. There were a great number of them in the Cabinet Room; not all of us attended all the meetings, not even McPherson, though I would think that Harry would have attended the great bulk of them. In other words, he is the man with the essential continuity. And continuity, in the recounting of this story, I would further suggest is the absolutely essential factor.

At any rate, I sat at Larry Temple's desk and began editing the main bulk or body of the speech. The President was getting rather impatient and I suppose, quite frankly, nervous. He knew that he was four minutes or so over his allotted air time.

Somewhere in the early afternoon I remember calling Harry. This too was one of my personal habits. I admire and respect his judgment enormously, I believe I've always worked extremely well with Harry. I simply wanted him to know what was going on in terms of the main body of the text. I don't think we made contact the first time. He was playing tennis, as I recall. But after that, in this little office complex of the President's office, Marvin Watson's office, and the one next door where I was, the pace quickened and became appreciably more brittle. I suspect what was happening was that the word of this dramatic presidential

withdrawal had somehow begun to communicate itself to the five or ten people present--ten is an outside figure.

Mc: Who else were you aware of knew about this last part of the speech?

M: I find it hard to separate out what I know now and what I knew then. The simple fact that George Christian was moving in and out of these two little offices would certainly seem to indicate that he knew. Jim Jones and Larry Temple certainly knew in the early afternoon, they may even have known of it before. Some of the President's secretaries were around, I don't know where they stood.

I remember placing some phone calls to some of the Treasury department people because I was trying to cut in the speech areas dealing with the economy. At some point Harry McPherson did call in and I suggested that he come in, explaining that once again I had the final blue pencil on what was essentially his text. We did some talking about it on the phone. At some other point the President expressed considerable chagrin that Harry was not on deck. Somehow or other Harry finally did arrive in the middle of the afternoon, I suppose.

We were by that time literally so busy trying to cut out several hundred words with the President quite literally breathing down our neck in the next office that I never knew whether Harry was aware of what Busby was doing up in the Mansion. I simply didn't have time to ask. I wasn't terribly concerned, I suppose, just assuming that Harry must have known.

Mc: This part of the speech was not with the body of the speech?

M: That's correct. The withdrawal part of the speech never showed up at all until--I'll get to that--later in the evening. It must have been about four o'clock when we had a cut-down version of the main text. I showed it to the President and it seemed to be all right.

By now we were really running out of time. I had to get a half-hour speech on teleprompter and I had the usual score of other tail-end tasks to attend to.

Mrs. Johnson had appeared in the staff picture some time in the afternoon. I remember she asked me to underscore the teleprompter paper and reading text for the President. This is something that I did from time to time. It is also something that Mrs. Johnson liked to have done, feeling that it helped the President's delivery. Is that clear?

Mc: How do you mean, "underscore"?

M: You simply take a black marker and mark the text for emphasis on a given word, on a given sentence. Sometimes you can mark optional deletions, simple little things like that. I remember going over several final speech drafts, final in the sense that they were done up on the speech typewriter, with Mrs. Johnson. That must also mean, of course, that we had a battery of my secretaries on hand, but I don't really remember who they were or where they were, which is rather odd. I suppose it must have been a very tense afternoon without me knowing it.

I don't believe I saw the final postscript to this speech again until somewhere around five p.m.

Mc: Were you cutting to make allowance for that additional two or three minutes that it took to add that too?

M: Yes, I had to figure that in, and that added considerably to the problem. The original speech was several minutes too long of itself.

Mc: Anyone pick this up?

M: Nobody thinks about these problems. These are just matters that the President assumes somebody will take care of.

Mc: I meant, this speech not only was being edited down to a set amount of

time but even less time than was forecast for the length of the speech.

M: It was perhaps considered, but it was inconsequential compared to what else was going on. To be frank, Presidents in television situations like this have a built-in buffer anyway. It doesn't really matter a damn how long a speech is. If it cuts into Beverly Hillbillies, that's their tough luck. But one likes to do as professional a job as you can, and professionally it is best to accommodate the requirements of the medium. I think we did finally wind up several minutes over the allotted time anyway.

In late afternoon and early evening we ran through a series of rehearsals. There was a very, very small group in the Oval Office. It was deliberately restricted because by now of course the President was going to utter aloud this pregnant P.S. And that's precisely what it was to most of us, a P.S.

There are some wonderful photographs of those rehearsals. As I recall them, there is the President and Mrs. Johnson, Jim Jones, three Signal Corps men, I'm not sure of George Christian, and myself. We even had a small discussion about the number of Signal Corps men who were actually required in that room. Jim Jones wanted one, someone on the technical side insisted on three, and I think we settled on two. I don't think the President was too happy to see any of them there, but these were the men who had to run the teleprompters and keep their hands on the sound controls, things like that.

I remember Clark Clifford showed up at some point because he simply stepped through the French doors, in from the patio area. That may have been later; that is, it may have been just before the actual broadcast. Lynda, Luci and Pat also showed up at this point. All I remember is

trudging through a very, very depressing afternoon and evening.

I recall doing some modifying somewhere at some time of these famous final words, but it's very blurred. Curiously, Busby had just disappeared. I don't ever recall seeing Buz again on that day after I left him up in the Mansion. Very odd.

There was a lull of ten, fifteen minutes or so sometime after six o'clock. I suppose I finally broke down in my White House training and put in a call for Harry McPherson. I reached him at a restaurant where he was having dinner with his family. I very much wanted to blurt out what was really going to happen "tonight." Instead I remember stammering and stuttering around the subject without ever mentioning it, until finally Harry guessed. I simply suggested that this was one night when he would very much want to be in the White House. He had not planned to come in, but Harry did indicate by the sharpness of his guess that he must have had some notion of something stirring in the President's mind, at least.

About an hour before we went on the air I also called two of my key writers and simply told them that it might be nice if they came down to the White House "tonight," instead of watching the President on TV.

Mc: Who were they?

M: I must have called more than two; I suppose it was Hardesty, Middleton, and McNulty. Anyway, all three of them did appear. I said nothing to them, I couldn't. They have since made considerable fun of me by saying they never saw such a miserable creature, but they were blaming it on assumed speech difficulties or hard times with LBJ. Nothing unusual in that.

I simply thought that one could keep security and at the same time allow these men who had worked--

Tape 2 of 3

Mc: Mr. Maguire, we were discussing the March 31st speech in that early evening before the speech, at this point.

M: I was saying that I had called in three of the principal writers without informing them of the presidential statement of withdrawal. I simply felt that we could keep security and yet keep faith with these hard-working staffers.

I was spending just about every minute of these final hours before air time either in the President's Oval Office or his little interior office or down in the teleprompter room where we were making the usual last minute and minor changes. We had by seven o'clock, I believe, run through two rehearsals. They had gone fairly well. Mrs. Johnson and I were actually working over the text on top of the President's television cabinet.

Finally the appointed hour arrived. Some four or five of us went into the Oval Office. The cameras had their little warning lights on. The President walked in with Mrs. Johnson and the family. As I've said before, I remember Luci, Lynda, and I believe Pat Nugent; Clark Clifford was present, I'm almost certain, for the entire address.

Mc: Had the President included the withdrawal statement in all of his rehearsals?

M: Yes.

Mc: Was there any question in your mind that he might not include the statement?

M: This is the most important point and the most significant memory of the whole day for me. I was just coming to that. I had a reading copy of the full text in my hand in one of the President's black folders. So had Mrs. Johnson. I went back to the rear of the room and I remember standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Jack Albright of Signal Corps. By the construction of the speech there was an automatic and natural pause at the end of what we would call the bombing pause speech and before the presidential footnote of withdrawal. Asthe President sat down at his desk I had no idea on earth whether or not he would deliver the final 200 words of withdrawal. As he read through his text I found myself caught up in the really enormous consequences of what he was saying about the bombing pause. And it wasn't until we suddenly skidded down to the end of the speech that I heard some rather heavy breathing at my right ear. It was Colonel Albright. And I suddenly realized that quite likely nobody in the room knew whether the President was going to go through with his withdrawal statement or not.

The President came to the end of the main passage and he did pause. I remember him lifting his head, opening his mouth, he uttered the first four or five words of the final section and I don't really remember anything else. I know I didn't follow it on my reading copy as I was supposed to have. I remember a rather large exhalation of breath from Colonel Albright, I remember Mrs. Johnson smiling in what I thought was a rather unusual way. By that, I mean the smile looked a little strained although Icould have been imagining it. Everybody else in the room, I think, looked rather grim, but then we were off-camera.

Mc: Did Mr. Johnson give any indication at any point during the speech to anyone else that he was going to include it and they should begin notifying--?

M: I really don't know. I think George Christian would have the answer to that. No, let me take that back. I suppose I really have not even thought through this day because I can now recall something which contradicts what I've just said.

About half an hour before air time, there was a flurry of phone calls outgoing from the White House, placed by Marvin, Jim, and I think Larry Temple also. Now that I think of it, I can be quite sure that those phone calls were to notify perhaps a dozen important people of the President's intentions--the leaders of the Senate and the House particularly. I think that would be a pretty good guess.

But as I went into that Oval Office, I had blanked out those phone calls. All I know as one man is that I had no idea whether the President would use the withdrawal statement or not. And I knew nothing about the previous reported incident of him having a similar statement in his pocket in January at the State of the Union message.

Mc: Why were you in doubt as to whether he would?

M: I simply didn't believe it.

Mc: Even though at a very early hour you had seen the prepared remarks.

M: There is an inconsistency there. But the White House is a place of inconsistencies.

Mc: Had anyone mentioned the fact that maybe he wouldn't deliver it?

M: Nobody mentioned the existence of the withdrawal statement at all for the entire afternoon. There was not one reference to it by anybody, even the sound men. The teleprompter men never referred to it. They were typing it on the tape, they were bringing it up to me, they would simply hand it to me and go back downstairs. Watson, Jones, Christian, Temple, and myself never talked about it, never hinted at it, never alluded to

it. All I remember is a parade of rather stiff faces for the entire afternoon.

Mc: Were any particular different restrictions placed on anybody who had come in contact with this, such as the Signal Corps?

M: Only in the sense that the President wished the absolute minimum of people to be present in the Oval Office during his rehearsals. Otherwise, he was dealing with his intimate and trusted advisers. There was no need for any additional precautions. If you didn't know the import of it, you didn't belong there. I was, for instance, cautious in my own call to Harry McPherson, but I simply made it because Harry is one of the most trustworthy people on the staff in my judgment.

Mc: Did you and Mr. McPherson discuss this afterwards?

M: Yes. Everybody discussed it afterwards. Afterwards, there were bottles pulled out and some rather masochistic drinking done in the lower depths of the White House. I know I lost two bottles of bourbon somewhere. I don't usually keep drink in my office, but these had been brought back from the around-the-world flight, and we sure put them to a good purpose.

Afterwards, of course, there was absolute commotion. The West Wing began to fill very rapidly with staffers and friends and associates. The phones never stopped ringing. The press was--well, you can imagine what it was like for the press!

You asked the question earlier about press notification. I'm sure George Christian made the proper arrangements, but I think the record shows that the press did <u>not</u> know. What they did know was that they had one of the biggest news beats of the Johnson Presidency in the bombing pause. It is both humorous and sad to talk to some of the reporters who

covered the White House about what really happened. None of them believed that he said what he said. They were watching it on various television sets around the town, some of them were in the press offices of the White House.

Many figures of considerable prominence, both from the United States and foreign countries, have told me of watching television that night, how they had stayed with the President through the speech, through the bombing pause announcement, then there was a natural tapering off towards the end of the main passage where one would philosophize a little bit, dealing perhaps more with style than substance, so there was an opportunity for people to go and get a can of beer or have a drink or go to the bathroom or, frankly, shut the set off. And I must have heard this same story from twenty, thirty, fifty people in many different countries. As a matter of fact, it was either Eric Sevareid or one of the NBC men who told me that some smart person in their studio realized this problem, and they ran a tape immediately. They banged a tape right on the air because they figured that a lot of people would have missed this thing. It was only two hundred and a few words. And the President, in terms of any speech maker, had delivered a commodity of great substance already--far more than enough to engage your mind and your emotions--and then all of a sudden, whammo! The biggest P.S. in history!

So the rest of the night, the remaining three or four hours, was spent as the White House staff family gathered. Some twenty of us wound up in the President's living quarters with him. I remember standing in the center hall holding a sheaf of telegrams while Marvin Watson held another sheaf and the President read through his own sheaf. And I can even remember thinking that that in itself was always something of a small miracle, that you can have this quantity of telegrams in a man's

hands literally thirty minutes or so after he has delivered one of these speeches. The mood, to say the least, was subdued. I don't know, I think we might have had a few drinks.

And then either the full press corps, or a significant number of them, came up to the Yellow Room where the President held a press conference. That's on the record so there's no need to dwell on it.

Mc: He didn't have any prepared remarks for that?

M: No, he certainly didn't need them. There were by my reading some very chastened gentlemen of the press in that room--and ladies. I suppose it should also be said for the record that some of them had tears in their eyes. I suppose one would have to assume that by their numbers and makeup the reverse would be true also. Some of them had cause to smile.

The press must have left somewhere around nine thirty or ten p.m. I think most of the staff did also. We returned to the West Wing, did some drinking in my office, moved into Cater's office, and unless I'm wrong, wound up in one of the most curious positions. It turned out that Cater was working on a major speech for delivery the next morning, I believe it was to the National Association of Broadcasters in Chicago. Now it would have been customary in the circumstances of this kind of speech to have Cater, working with his assistant Duggan, also work with myself and McPherson because Harry and I are most interested in forums like this--most interested in communications as Douglass was. Cater had also gone ahead on his own while the rest of us were literally locked up with the problems of Viet Nam. He had gone ahead and crafted a major speech, major in the sense that he, Douglass Cater, from his own background as a communicator and his own concerns about the relationships between press and presidency had put some very important words into the President's mouth. Frankly they were

words that have been recalled to me by men like Frank Stanton of CBS within the last several weeks. At any rate, I think Harry and I were both quite surprised to find another major speech staring everyone in the face at midnight. There was some rather hysterical laughter about the problems of getting headlines. Douglass, I am sure, had no idea of the withdrawal statement, but I give him a great deal of credit. He just picked himself up off what I presume was the floor and plunged back in at 11 o'clock at night, into finishing up a major speech. I made a very small contribution, McPherson stayed to talk with Cater, and I believe added his own inimitable touches to the speech.

One of my prize possessions is a photograph of the President sitting on Air Force One the next morning on his way to Chicago, reading a blazing newspaper headline, "LBJ Withdraws." He has his hat and overcoat on in the picture, which is quite unusual for him.

So all in all, it was one hell of a weekend. From here on you'll have to read Teddy White and Eric Goldman and all the men who really know what went on in the White House those two days.

Mc: Mr. Maguire, just thinking back on some of the things you've said, it seems one of your capacities was to sort of advise the President during these rehearsals, or at least look after the details of that end of a speech. I'm relating this to referring back to any sort of liaison with the industry and your relations with it.

M: You mean with the broadcasting medium?

Mc: Yes.

M: No, that's making one jump too many. Your first point is valid.

Mc: I think I'm looking at this in two ways now, perhaps combining them. One, anybody advising the President on how to proceed with television addresses,

and the next step being anybody in the capaci ty of liaison with the industry.

M: No, they don't go together at all really. The first point though is interesting in that a Valenti, a Moyers, a Christian, and someone like myself, for whatever reasons, did have a small portfolio which would be loosely labeled "adviser" on television. I think it flowed mainly from our interest in the matter, rather than the President ever singling out any one of us.

My own role was a little bit more formal in the sense that it is true that I normally did have the speech--any speech--in my hands at the last minute. Now this is a position not only of great responsibility, but of considerable peril. I don't believe I ever thought consciously of it, but of course if one had one's own ax to grind, there was quite literally nobody between you, the President, and the people of the world.

I can recall only one occasion where my editing and rewriting efforts did cause considerable staff chagrin, but in that case I happened to be alone at the Ranch with Lyndon B. Johnson and he did a considerable part of the drafting and gave me the full benefit of his thinking, which meant that you were dealing with the man who ultimately does know more than any of his staff advisers.

Mc: What speech was this?

M: This was the Bal Harbour AFL-CIO Convention. It was a rather strange episode, but what you do, or what I normally did in these situations, particularly with someone like Harry McPherson with whom I always found it such a pleasure and such a profit to work, was to touch in with Harry any time anybody gave me a strange version of a draft. Sometimes Harry of course had never seen them either. I would do the same with

Rostow.

I do take back what I said about there being only one instance of confusion generating conflict. I must be singular in the sense that I am probably the only man who has ever provoked Walt Rostow to wrath. I inserted a finger into a sensitive diplomatic pie by adding my own ill-chosen paragraph to a document that had been most sensitively and laboriously executed in collaboration with Dean Rusk. The matter dealt with arms negotiation. Somehow or other it slipped through Walt and reached State. Dean Rusk called Walt, Walt kept Dean on the line while he sent for me, and as I walked in Walt blazed forth in anger, making sure that the Secretary could overhear the chewing out on the other end. But these things happen in the best administered of families.

Mc: What had you done?

M: I had gone a little bit too far overboard in accepting the policy judgments of a young man on Walt's staff who did not think that State and Walt were going far enough in the draft. It was always the tendency of people like myself, and I suppose also of Harry McPherson--in fact, in many ways I consider Harry my teacher in these matters--it was always our basic inclination to go the extra inch. It can be dangerous, but you do have to rely in these situations on the President having the ultimate judgment.

I might want to pull back from that a little bit also. Given the complexities of foreign policy, I suppose no one man, not even the President of the United States, no matter who or what his time, should be forced into a situation where he alone has the ultimate judgment. That's why he needs his NSC advisers and State and Defense.

But to get back to your first question, my participation in the March 31st

speech was not at all uncommon in the sense that I was doing there a job that I would do on eight out of ten, nine out of ten daily speeches. The President felt the need for someone to perform the final editing tasks. For some reason he picked me out quite early on. It has been suggested to me by other staffers, some of them with an experience and intelligence that I can only respect, that what the President was doing with me was simply availing himself of the opportunities for a different draft of a given speech, should he not like the original. This was very common indeed, and this of course in staff terms was the most fragile of situations. It is never easy for a special assistant to the President or even a staff writer to submit a draft to the President and never see it again and to know or to discover that the President has given it to another man. The man may not always have been someone named Maguire. It could have been any one of three or four of us, but I believe I touched on this before, at least in the sense that it was my habit to always consult with the original writer, even if after the fact, and that's an important point in the management of writers and writing operations because sometimes you simply cannot afford the time or the trouble of affixing band-aids to egos. You can sympathize, you can try and alleviate or assuage the hurt, but sometimes that medication has to be applied after the president has actually delivered the speech.

Mc: What about critiquing his delivery after a rehearsal?

M: Yes, we did some of that. I don't really believe I had a large part in that, probably because I somehow or another never believed in it. From time to time there was a great to-do about it. Certainly the President loved to receive critiques, he encouraged them. I suppose in my case it must have been that I never saw anything seriously wrong or wonderfully

positive to comment on. Bot Kintner put a great deal of his time into critiquing presidential press conferences.

Now there, as far as the technicalities of press conferences--in other words, the lighting, the use of a lavaliere mike, the abi lity to walk around the room, the problem of reading as opposed to ad libbing--all of these things all of us would comment on from time to time.

Mc: Or a podium or not a podium.

M: Or a podium or not a podium. I personally think that Lyndon Johnson as a speaker, if it's possible to divorce a speaker from his content, is superlative. I don't think he needs any advice from anybody.

Mc: The reason I'm pursuing this was because of course there has been so much discussion about how he came across in the medium, and the main body of the discussion was that he didn't come across well.

M: Dorothy, you can almost grant the importance of the subject by dismissing it. It may be one of these few areas of presidential operations where the simple truth is the truth. Lyndon Johnson is simply uncomfortable with the medium of television. He is by no means alone in that. There is something of a basic incompatibility between the man and mechanical contraptions which project him in this day and age. There are some mechanical means of overcoming this incompatibility, and I do believe the staff tried to the best of their ability--it may have been a limited ability, but I think you're up against human nature.

Some pundits would always couch a judgment like that as criticism. I simply cannot see it that way. I see no reason why one should assume that contemporary leaders should be comfortable with this devouring animal. If one knows anything at all about broadcasting as a business, as a technique, one has to know that this simple business of compatibility

of newscaster and camera, of actress and lighting, of politicians and makeup--all of these are just factors within a larger factor.

Now, whatever Robert Montgomery did for Eisenhower I suppose helped him. However Mr. Nixon has improved his performance has without doubt helped him. FDR, by popular lore or mythology, was a gifted radio performer. But I don't think many pros in the business would put it that simply. He happened to have a good voice. But much more importantly, he happened to be the right man for the right medium at that time. Jack Kennedy of course is the classic example in the favorable category, and it is true the man was a natural for the TV medium. He didn't need anybody. But let us also remember that there was probably as much artificial contrivance in the cases of a Kennedy press conference as there has been with any recent modern President. And I suppose given the rules of the game, if that's not all to the good, that's the way it is.

Also, there have been many, many occasions when President Johnson on television has been as good as any other performer and on some occasions, considerably better than the bulk of them. But it is ironic that a man who actually has something of a broadcaster's background and who has had thirty years exposure to the simple act of public performance did have this human problem with the medium. One doesn't have to accept McLuhan to know the dimensions of the problem. We see that.

Mc: What about relations between the White House and the broadcasting industry?

M: Oh, I don't think I'm qualified to talk about that. You can look at it on the high level of personal relationships with men like Frank Stanton, Bob Kintner.

Mc: Was Kintner brought on in this capacity?

M: Not preeminently, but simply by the nature of Bob's background. He's a

gifted broadcast professional. It was natural for the President to assume that Bob would be helpful in these areas, and it was also more than natural that Bob would apply his talents in that area to helping the President. Bob did, for instance, get down to the nitty gritty of lighting of press conferences. That was a problem in the Johnson Administration. At the remove of only these six-seven months, it seems preposterous that the White House would have such problems. But I have also had the President remark to me how primitive the facilities were in the White House Theater. They are primitive. I don't know whether they have been changed, but when a President in the middle of the election campaign is delivering a speech on behalf of Hubert Humphrey, which very frankly has been pushed and shoved on him by me, and he turns to me at ten o'clock in the evening in the White House Theater and says, "For God's sake, Charles, can't I even have a flag!" That's how primitive it was. The idea of me scurrying off to New York overnight and producing a half-hour network color television show of the President supporting Humphrey in one day is still unbelievable to some of my broadcast friends in New York, and yet that's the way these things were done. It's preposterous.

I called E. G. Marshall, spent two nights sleeping in the White House to write the script, the President taped his twenty minute portion of it, I flew up on a morning to WNEW in New York, which is not the best production facility in the world. E. G. Marshall was wonderful, the crew was very obliging--they only walked off the set in a huff once when I made the mistake of telling one of them what he should be doing. I caught the ten o'clock shuttle back with a television tape under my arm at night. The President looked at it the next morning and it went on the

air the night after that.

Now no executive of any major corporation in the country would ever dare to do things like that. Of course what I'm getting at--it is an intriguing subject--is the significance of that example to a basic, a really basic understanding of the medium. You don't understand the medium when you allow occurrences like this to happen because, very simply, what could have happened, and really what should have happened, is that a weak person would have been in charge of that operation. Two things would have eventuated: one, there would never have been the show; secondly, it would have been a lousy show. So you're flying on a wing and a prayer.

I can tell you one other thing that occurs to me. Had Bob Kintner been in the White House, we would never have done it because no broadcasting professional would ever have conceived that it was possible to do and achieve your goals.

Mc: Can you add anything to why Mr. Kintner was not still in the White House at that point?

M: Well, I have sort of lost track of the time continuity with Bob. He must have been there slightly over a year, and he was in failing health. He had a very serious eye problem. I think in the end it had even affected his inner ear because he was beginning to lose his balance. So then he left for this major eye operation in New York, and we missed him.

Mc: Only one other thing that comes to mind about the medium of broadcasting is one particular press conference in late '67, and it's referred to as the roving press conference. It was so very, very successful. I believe even those in attendance of the press and TV arose and gave Mr. Johnson a standing ovation.

M: It was a great show.

Mc: But unrepeated.

M: But unrepeated. I'm not the one to ask about either the circumstances leading up to it or what happened afterwards. I've heard many stories about it, which means there should be many gentlemen with more accurate information that you could call upon. I watched it, for a change, in my office, together with Bob Kintner. Bob habitually, incidentally, watched on his television set in his office. He did not attend the press conferences. He wanted to see the President on the tube, and then he would have a memo critiquing the President's performance on the President's desk within an hour.

You're nodding as if there's some great significance to that, and I simply suggest that--I can't resist saying it, there ain't.

Mc: All right. I'm about to change to another major area unless--

M: Good.

Mc: --there's anything else you want to add on what we have talked about.

M: No, I'm going to put a rein on my tongue, there's simply too much to add. But if we're going to move on to the Cabinet, I think we should.

Mc: Initially,let me begin. I'll ask you how you came into the position and what your responsibilities were. Let me add that I'm going to be very dependent on your sort of elaboration on this because I don't think I quite understand the capacity myself.

M: I don't know which one of those questions should come first. I suppose we'll have to blunder through it, as usual.

Mc: Let's begin with how you came onto--

M: No, I think I'd rather begin another way.

Mc: All right.

M: I want to begin by saying that once again there's a caveat in anything I say about the Cabinet. The caveat begins with the fact that I inherited a going operation, and I have never been quite clear on the exact nuances of my predecessors and the antecedents thereof.

To the best of my knowledge, Horace Busby was the first presidential staffer with responsibilities for the Cabinet. Now that's a clumsy phrase, but I am trying deliberately to make the point that President Johnson did not always formally designate Secretary to the Cabinet. In other words the job was done by several assistants in the White House without the formal title. In that category there was Busby, Valenti, and for a very brief time I think Joe Califano also.

There is a significance to this which I am still pondering in the broader context of, say, a political scientist examining the Cabinet as a mechanism in the Johnson Presidency. As I have indicated before, I slid into the post by virtue of my early association with Jack Valenti. The Cabinet meetings at that time were somewhat irregular, and Jack would prepare briefing papers. These were fairly simple, I think considerably simpler than the Busby operation from what I know of that from the files.

When Jack left, Bob Kintner came on and he did have the formal title of Secretary to the Cabinet. It was so announced in the President's press briefing, heralding the arrival of Robert E. Kintner. Bob, for his part, executed his responsibilities in keeping with the formality of his title. For instance, he visited each Cabinet Secretary and I believe also some members of the sub-Cabinet. He set up reporting procedures, routines for exchange of information between the White House and the Cabinet, and department to department. He also put a great deal of time and managerial effort into the preparation of the agenda. Unless my

memory betrays me, I think the first agenda delivered by Robert Kintner as Cabinet Secretary to the President must have been over ninety pages. Bob sought to bring method and purpose to a rather unsystematic and frankly disorganized system.

My own role at that period was somewhat fuzzy. I had certain agreements with Mr. Watson, and I therefore assumed the President, as to how I was to move from the Valenti sphere, no longer existent, to the Kintner sphere. Bob had the title of Cabinet Secretary, so I simply assisted him for the period of his tenure at the White House.

When Bob left, I suppose I simply inherited the title. It was a fairly typical office situation, a job needed to be done, somebody was doing the job; therefore, titles were relatively unimportant. The Cabinet knew who had the action. They knew it was me, as they had known it was Bob before. It wasn't until some two months later that I had a meeting with the President on the Cabinet. He was very encouraging in discussing some of the plans I had, plans that stem as much from my academic background in the study of the American presidency as they did from my experience in the White House. I remember his rueful remark that the thing that bothered him most about Cabinet meetings was that they were dull. He said, "I just don't want them falling asleep at the damned table." No remark could have pleased me more because I had some rather ambitious ideas about Cabinet meetings as part of, but perhaps distinct from, the process of Cabinet management and affairs.

At any rate, I returned to my office very much fired up on a Saturday morning and spent the remainder of that day and that night sleeping in my office and all of the next Sunday morning preparing a rather large and, as I said, very ambitious set of proposals for the President.

Mc: This would be in 1967?

M: I suppose so, yes. It came to some forty pages. I remember walking it over to him and giving it to him in the swimming pool. I had a moment's fear there that all of my great ideas might wind up water-logged, but they didn't. He was quite pleased with them. Except, to be frank, nothing ever came of them! White House staff politics entered at that point. Other factors of job assignments and staff responsibilities also intruded.

Mc: How did you mean White House politics?

M: The nature of a Cabinet Secretary's job is internally political in the sense that if he seeks to do his job with any initiative he must necessarily cross paths with a handful of other presidential staffers; that is not to say he must cross swords, although sometimes that too follows. We had a basic staff system in the White House where four or five principal staffers were given direct presidential authorization to deal with department X, department Y, department A, department B.

Mc: This would be in forming domestic policy, foreign policy, legislation, etc.?

M: That's correct. These were quite specific assignments. These assistants were required to report regularly to the President on their own areas of Agriculture, regulatory agencies, Defense, etc.--Treasury, HEW.

Speaking of HEW reminds me that Douglass Cater was involved also in this Cabinet Secretary go-round. I am simply not clear as to what happened, what his exact role was, where it began, and where it terminated. I know that at one point Douglass and I worked together on Cabinet matters for a period of some months. Douglass, for instance may even have been introduced or referred to at a Cabinet meeting as the Secretary to the Cabinet. Now this was after Kintner left. I was there in the

room, Cater was there in the room, so it's all blurred, and I suppose it's blurred because I always considered it inconsequential. I was basically doing the work, I worked very well with Doug, we didn't have any problems that couldn't be managed either individually or collectively.

Mc: I've gotten you a little off the track. You were talking about your proposals. Let me ask you if these proposals were an attempt to correct or improve former inadequacies, either as you saw them or as the President saw them.

M: You might think that you're pushing me really off the track, but my proposals were generated by much broader factors involving, I suppose the entire history of the American Cabinet. What President Johnson was saying to me, in asking that people stay awake at Cabinet meetings, is a problem that has been faced by the majority of American Presidents. It is also, by my reading of history and memoirs, a problem created or compounded by Cabinet secretaries.

The Cabinet is a strange organism within the body of government. There are some fundamental things that I believed should be said about it which I incorporated in my proposals and which, of course, led to the proposals in part and whole. The first is that there are usually distorted expectations of a Cabinet. By public mythology it is a corporate board of directors that literally advises the President. By journalistic readings it is a relic from another age. By some political scientist readings it has been called the presidential vermiform appendix, in other words something that should be cut out and cast aside. I don't think it is any of those things as much as it is <u>all</u> of those things.

I do not think that Lyndon Johnson as an individual ever gave much thought in this frame of reference to the Cabinet, nor is there any

reason why he should. One of the first actions performed for President Kennedy, the avowed intellectual of government--and I do not say that in any caustic manner--one of the first actions undertaken by Fred Dutton was a compilation of qualified scholarly opinion on the Cabinet. Fred gathered it together with the assistance of some people at Brookings and let Jack Kennedy read it. The only problem with it is that there are no great number of sources on Cabinet. What Jack Kennedy wound up reading was forty pages, thirty-five pages of which were Xeroxes from a book by Professor Richard Fenno. Well, I had had the privilege of studying with Fenno and also Neustadt, so they were my credentials in a way for undertaking to revitalize the Johnson Cabinet, and I did use the word "revitalize."

For example, speaking of Cabinet meetings alone, and they are only a part of what you could call Cabinet operations, it occurred to me that nobody with the title of Cabinet Secretary or with that portfolio was talking to other staff members about Cabinet meetings, and the basic reason was professional jealousy. This is something that all organizations face. An advertising manager does not necessarily want to consult with the sales manager, and the marketing manager sits above both of them. I happened, at that moment in my White House experience, to be rather chagrined about the conduct of Cabinet secretaries vis-a-vis their colleagues on the White House staff. I thought that we were rendering the President a great disservice by clutching Cabinet affairs to our private bosoms, and so I moved to set up a rather simple system with the President's approval. I had regularized Cabinet meetings on a fortnightly basis, every second Wednesday. On the Friday preceding every second Wednesday, a group of the staff would meet in one of the larger offices--Cater's

or McPherson's, Cater's because it was the nicest--and we would kick around a Cabinet agenda. This is, within the narrow frame of Cabinet affairs, very important to the history of the Johnson Presidency. It meant that five or six principal White House staffers were setting the agenda for the Cabinet. More commonly in the past a Cabinet Secretary--again you've got to draw the distinction of with or without title--would go to the departments and ask them for suggestions for the agenda. This didn't work. And that was an exclusive reliance on the Cabinet departments. Invariably and horribly, the answers would come back "nothing to discuss. Don't want to waste the President's time, etc., etc., etc."

What this was reflecting was one of the great continuities of the American Cabinet. I agree with the historical evidence as analyzed by political scientists for four generations, that Cabinet members do not necessarily want to be kept awake at Cabinet meetings. Their motivations are many and complicated. The only motivation that probably does not intrude itself is sheer laziness.

I think it was Jesse Jones who summed it all up by saying something like "I don't say much at Cabinet meetings or bring much to Cabinet meetings because no one at that table can help me except the President, and the last place in the world where I want to discuss my problems is before my peers." It makes sense.

So what I got my hands on finally was something of great intellectual interest, possibly of considerable historical consequence, and also of great immediate value to the President and the members of his Cabinet. As I've said, it's a subject that I might be doing some studying and thinking and writing about myself, but I return to this one hard fact of these White House staff meetings. We achieved so many things in these meetings.

We achieved ventilation. We allowed White House staffers to mock and scorn and berate the Cabinet. We gave them an opportunity to get it off their chests, to make jokes. How many times I've seen a colleague leave one of our staff meetings, stand at the door, laugh at me and say, "Christ, almighty, Chuck, I wish the Cabinet meetings were as interesting as these." Well, I always counted that as a great plus because for one thing, I was sitting there taking notes; there was great discussion of important issues. Youth, for instance. The only time I think the White House staff ever came together to discuss the problems of American youth and maybe even world youth was in one of these Cabinet staff meetings and later at the Cabinet table. They were both excellent meetings. If we had had another year or so, I think we really could have pushed some product, some presidential product out of these meetings, because into that we drew an outside opinion, we drew Dick Helms. Now there's a strange thing that came out.

Out of a discussion in a White House staff meeting for Cabinet purposes on youth, we drew Dick Helms in to make a presentation to the Cabinet. For my purposes it was a disaster, but at least there was action and we did have control over it and nothing dreadful came of it. But John Gardner, Bill Wirtz, Wilbur Cohen, other people have talked to me since. This is a Cabinet meeting they remember. This was something that was worth remembering.

We would also discuss Vietnam policy. We would discuss labor, narcotics, religion.

In a way, what was happening was that we were using the Cabinet mechanism in one of its traditional senses. The Cabinet is said to be a political sounding board, that's one of its great uses for a President.

I believe it's true. The President can bring ideas, thoughts, arguments to these twelve or thirteen men, and literally hope to get back an echo of what their constituencies think or might think about them.

In these White House staff meetings we were doing the same thing. We could gather together hopefully the best brains in the White House and we were simply kicking ideas around the room. There was fallout in these meetings. A Rostow argument might affect a speech that somebody was working on. A Califano statement could be used a week or so from then outside the Cabinet parameters.

So that end of it, I thought, worked rather well. There are some of my good friends in more experienced circles, like John Roche, who would go to his grave before he'd admit that, but even John had a good time in these meetings and we all had a good time listening to John.

Out of these meetings and through simultaneous contact with the Cabinet departments, I would prepare an agenda. In most cases we were not seeking policy decisions either from the President in a Cabinet meeting or from the members of his Cabinet in that meeting. At this level, and I want to emphasize again that this is only one level of any Cabinet Secretary's operations, we were seeking to stimulate, to stir discussion, to create dialogue I suppose, and most importantly to fulfill or strengthen another organizational aspect of this mechanism called a Cabinet, and that is simply the building of esprit. This is something that political scientists have called the creation of "administrative coherence." The Cabinet in this sense is important only because it brings together a government team. It is one of the few occasions where on a regular basis the managers can come together. And you could even give an extreme reading that it doesn't actually matter what they discuss,

what policy is decided, what policy is not decided. They're in the presence of the President. This is very important; no matter how big a gun you are in the Executive Branch, this is important. You go back and tell your bureaucrats, tell your clients, tell the Farm Bureau, tell the AFL-CIO, "Well, yesterday in the Cabinet meeting the President said...." That's clout! That's important. That's coin of the realm. But as important as it is, it's still just a beginning, or so I thought.

So without going into details of these forty pages of proposals that I brought to the President, I was simply looking for mechanical means, staff contrivances, organizational methods to liven up the Cabinet, to make it more meaningful and productive. I can't even recall many of the proposals now, but one of them, for instance, was the use of film. What are we doing in 1967 and '68 sitting around this tired old wooden table in this rather dreary room where you come and meet every second Wednesday and you sit in the same old chair and the drapes are the same and the telephone, the procedure, and everything is the same? This, dynamically, is boredom.. You have institutionalized dullness.

So, with some of my communications background and some suggestions from other people, I tried even for artificial ways of breaking through this. No microphones. Why not? Well, because the myth had grown up around people that Cabinet secretaries don't like to speak for the record. Baloney! Has anybody ever asked them? Of course not. Somebody read a column, probably written by Hugh Sidey, and they all believed this. And all the Cabinet members read the column by Hugh Sidey, and they all believe it. But Hugh Sidey doesn't believe it.

Taking of minutes. Some inside insights into Cabinet procedures. President Johnson is now sitting on the best collection of Cabinet

meetings probably ever compiled in the history of the American presidency, with the possible exception of Eisenhower. All of those minutes are taken in my longhand shorthand except two. I have never understood why we weren't able to record in a Cabinet meeting. I have devised three or four rather simple mechanical plans for invisible recording--not secretive, just invisible. If people don't see mikes, they feel a lot better about it.

But the White House mythology during the time that I served as Cabinet Secretary and when I assisted Valenti and Kintner was that the President did not want this done. So I devised my own method of simply sitting there and taking it down, word for word, and then sending it to him "one copy, eyes only." And I think he was rather pleased to have it.

I made a very simple case, nothing to do with the Cabinet operation. The case was history, and we just let it go at that. So now Dorothy Territo has these what I call "Cabinet dossiers"--they're one gray book into which is the agenda, the attendance, the full minutes, any documents exchanged at the meeting, any statements made by the President. It's a complete package, fortnight by fortnight by fortnight.

Towards the end we did tape two of the meetings. And having done that, I wondered what I was doing taking all those notes for all those hours.

Mc: How was it you were able to tape these two?

M: One, I simply asked as a test and Jim Jones somehow set it up with the President. And the final one was the last Cabinet meeting, which I suggested we should get on the record.

I don't believe anyone ever really got their hands on the Cabinet Secretary job in the White House. It may not have been for lack of

trying, though I suspect that lack was an important, perhaps even critical part of this shortcoming.

Mc: What was your assessment of how the Cabinet functioned during your contact with it?

M: First, it functioned the way the President wanted it to function. It's like press conferences, as we discussed just now. Press conferences come out the way the President makes them come out, whether or not he wants them to come out that way. The Cabinet is fundamentally and all-pervasively, it's always the shadow of another institution, the American presidency. I'm not quite sure in my own mind what major categories of characterization I would give to the Johnson Cabinet. I don't want to be superficial about it because it is important, not only to the record but it is personally important to me. And I am literally in the midst of sorting out my own judgments and impressions.

It's a roundabout way to go at it, and we probably don't have time to do it, but to be intelligent and tolerant one can only look at any given Cabinet in the context of other Cabinets. You must have some yardstick.

It would be fair to say, I suppose, that theJohnson Cabinet was used importantly but not exclusively as a sounding board; that is, more than it was ever used as a decision-making center or process. It was also utilized quite significantly as a mechanism for informational exchange. This President is a great believer in every member of his administration possessing all the facts. He would go so far, I think, as to say that there is no reason why the Secretary of Agriculture should not be able to speak as intelligently on the problems of Viet Nam as Secretary Rusk, not in Rusk's depth of course, but certainly that a Freeman or a Wirtz or a

Gardner should be able to carry the ball as one of the top men in the administration team.

We were also very conscious of that fact, that the administration was to some part embodied in these twelve or thirteen men. They should be spokesmen for the administration. They should most hopefully conduct themselves as members of a tightly knit team, and I think in that respect we were fairly fortunate. Many administrations have been racked by discord within the Cabinet, clashes of personality, or by dominance of the Cabinet by some strong personality like a Hoover or a McAdoo or a Mellon, whose influence with the President--the man at the top--was so much greater than that of his colleagues.

There is a great tendency both within the Cabinet, curiously enough, and outside at some rather sophisticated levels to restrict commentary or analysis of the Cabinet to the Cabinet meeting. It simply is the first thing that pops into your mind. Now there is also a scholarly matrix for this that puts the Cabinet as a process instead of an institution, and I think my own experience has borne that out. You are, for instance, engaged with gentlemen, great departments, and agencies representing the Cabinet after you leave the Cabinet Room. There are also, as I referred to before, four or five of your White House colleagues who are in daily contact with the Cabinet, and that is Cabinet business, and that is a part of the way a Cabinet functions. That, in short, is the collegial role versus the departmental role, but I don't think that that apposition should be made as strongly as it quite often is.

It may be that Presidents are wisest when they allow nature, human and bureaucratic, to take its course. One of the questions I'm asking myself now is what would the advantages and debits be to making the Cabinet process,

the Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet affairs more substantive, more significant than they are now? It could be done, but whether it should be done or not is where I hesitate. Taking the Johnson White House as the case in point, I once made the argument that Joe Califano should be the Cabinet Secretary. My reasoning was that Joe was the man who had the most intimate and the most important contact and the most frequent contact with the heads of the departments and their most important assistants of us all. I would also wonder, for instance, if Joe should not have simply assigned Cabinet responsibilities to one of his key assistants, let it work that way. Because what you came down to was a constructed collision between Cabinet secretaries in the Califano complex. There was no reason in many cases why a given Cabinet Secretary should know about Califano's business, and the reverse holds true. But if you do not have compatibility between a Califano, a Sherman Adams, a Colonel House, and the man formally or informally charged with Cabinet responsibilities, you've got problems. And the President is not being served and the Cabinet is not being utilized. I tend to think that this situation, having occurred so regularly in the history of presidential government, must underlie many of the periods of quiescence or, frankly, even atrophy of modern Cabinets.

But again you've got to come back to the first point. The Cabinet is important and effective only if, when, and how the President wants it to be. And I don't really think we've had any stupid Presidents. They know what's going on. They may not be able to give their precious and sparse attention to the Cabinet, and that of course is where the staff comes in and that's where I got the basic motivation for doing this set of proposals, but very frankly the proposals died because the President

passed them on to Califano and that was the end of that.

Only it wasn't really the end of it. What you do then is run an end, and you go to Joe and you talk to him. People see, unfortunately, power slipping from their grasp--another body, another office staff entering into their domain, and you're right up against the old brick wall. Well, instead of banging your head about it, you kind of might try and slip a few bricks out around the edges of the walls. You do the best job you can. And that's one thing we achieved with these staff meetings. Califano, Levinson, McPherson, Cater, Rostow, some of the NSC boys--I think we got some pretty good stuff on the agenda.

I'm sure in my own mind that we could have improved the process quite significantly if we had only had another year or more. That feeling is neither denied nor affirmed by the Cabinet members that I have discussed the matter with. I did some rather serious and heavy talking with men like John Gardner, Bill Wirtz, Wilbur Cohen, Clark Clifford more a little later on, about the Cabinet, about what we could do together. And that had never been done before. No Cabinet Secretary had ever gone to these people and sat down and said, "Look, we're all equals and we're all trying to serve the one man. What would you think we could do about it?" Or, "Do you have a bright young man in your department who might like to take a week and think about this, because I've got some bright young men and I've got some bright young women. Why don't we all just sit down and see what we can do to use this instrument that is not being used in the judgment of the President effectively as it is now?" It's as simple as that.

Mc: Mr. Maguire, it would appear that you're saying so much of the Cabinet's utilization and service to the President is dependent on the President.

Therefore, what were Mr. Johnson's views of the function and the service of the Cabinet to him?

M: I only had two meetings where an answer to that question might have come out. I've indicated one of them was modified displeasure, or perhaps, in better words, the recognition that the instrument could be improved to the service of the President, the Cabinet, and the country.

Mc: To do what? To make decisions or be used as a better forum?

M: I wouldn't think that any President would ever look at a Cabinet in terms of a desired goal that it makes decisions. It must by the same token be implicit in any President's considerations, but modern Presidents know full well that Cabinets do not make decisions. Collective decisions I suppose were made to the last significant degree under Eisenhower, but there, and we know this now from the official record, the decisions were programmed into the Cabinet meeting in the sense that President Eisenhower would have a recommendation from two or three staff groups or two or three different committees. Max Raab has written that it was common enough for President Eisenhower, having circulated all of the appropriate memoranda to the Cabinet members in advance, then to give his decision at the table, having listened to the opinions of the Cabinet individually and I suppose, in some sense, collegially.

But I come back to the other point of a political or a public sounding board. I think that that there is where President Johnson found the Cabinet most useful. After all, he was a man who dealt one-to-one, man-to-man with the Cabinet every day of every week of his administration. His door was always open to the Cabinet. In fact, and this is probably historically significant, there were many times when the appointments secretary would call me and ask me to go around the Cabinet on the phone

and ask any of them "Would you like to see the President?" Now what had happened was that the President had some time available in that week, and instead of swimming or bowling or golfing or whatever other Presidents have done, Lyndon Johnson was aware enough of Cabinet that he--

Tape 3 of 3

Mc: Mr. Maguire, you were discussing the Cabinet and a question I had posed regarding your assessment of the Johnson Cabinet function and utilization. I noted down here very quickly that the end of your sentence was wanting people to come in and talk, to put a period where the tape ran out.

M: Yes, the point should be made that while it is not historically unique, it is historically significant that President Johnson did actually have an open door policy for his Cabinet as individuals. There was, for instance, to use one shorthand comparison, nothing of the lineup outside the President's office door at the end of Cabinet meetings which occurred with some regularity during the Eisenhower Administration and also, from the historical record, in the Truman Administration. Rexford Tugwell has also indicated that the same was typical of the FDR time. This necessity was obviated in the Johnson term by the simple fact that the President was available literally at all times to his Cabinet as individuals, and would also quite frequently and with some regularity reach out to them and ask would they like to see him for half an hour.

Mc: What was the reaction of the Cabinet to this?

M: Initially I suppose it ranged from surprise to shock. There were always gentlemen, I suppose, whose natures or given dilemmas of the moment might had led them to think that this was too good to be true and that perhaps the President was inviting them over to discuss a ticklish problem or even

to issue a reprimand. This really was not the case, although I don't think the President would have been a bit abashed had the circumstances warranted it.

This might also lead into another aspect of the Cabinet, which was its composition; President Johnson took great pride in the caliber of his appointees. He referred to it on several occasions, both in Cabinet meetings and at receptions for the Cabinet--I certainly know the intensity of his feelings on this subject. No one can forget that in effect he inherited a Cabinet. I hope that history will not overlook the fact that he managed to preserve not only loyalty but all of the other attributes that a Cabinet member must bring to his job. There were reasons, largely political, why the cohesion of the Johnson Cabinet should have evaporated or even exploded. That it did not is of course testimony to a number of men, but I think the vital element in the continuing cohesion was President Johnson's leadership.

Beneath this there is the actual process of selection for the Cabinet. Here John Macy would have much of historical value to say. In one of our last Cabinet meetings the President went to some length to explain his feelings of pride and satisfaction that, unlike other administrations, no Cabinet member had committed any serious transgression and none was even likely to upon leaving office. There had been no scandals, no feuds, no great divisive circumstances, although the press in some cases had pretended to see some. John Macy is much more qualified than I am to talk about the processes of appointment. They struck me, as something of an insider-outsider, as being quite meticulous, even exhaustive in some of the search processes, and the erection of extraordinarily high standards which were really never lowered either in

terms of the President's estimate or the incumbent's performance.

It really is rather a remarkable Cabinet in its individual components and as they must necessarily affect its collegial role. They were extraordinary men, each in their own right, and they were able to work together as a team to the limit imposed upon them by White House interpretations of what a Cabinet was and should do.

Mc: Were there no occasions of relations becoming a bit tenuous between a Cabinet member and Mr. Johnson? I'm thinking specifically of a Wirtz, a Gardner, Mr. McNamara, a Udall.

M: Tenuous is a gentle word, I suppose. Each of the men you have mentioned is very, very much an individual in his own right. I do know something of the John Gardner incident, and I simply suggest that John Gardner has not changed his basic feelings for Lyndon Johnson, man or President, at all. John's problems were other than White House centered, and it's best to take them up with him.

Bill Wirtz is one of the men I admire most as man and administration man. I have always personally enjoyed working with him, but I suppose, as one of his assistants once said to me, "that's because you're both very difficult."

I don't know anything of worth about the McNamara situation. I have an enormous admiration for him, as I believe the President does.

What we're talking about, I think, is the normal give-and-take, the marching and the counter-marching that had to occur under the given political circumstances of our time in the White House. It may be that a proper study of the Johnson Cabinet would turn up evidence that would tip the balance sharply in the other direction. It may be that some, conceivably the majority of the Johnson Cabinet, were uncomfortable,

unhappy, unsatisfied, unfilfilled to different degrees. I have seen some indications of that, but I have seen no indications where blame is either entertained, let alone laid at the President's door.

What does come up every time in every instance is the single word "Viet Nam." All you have to do is to consider the ramifications of that problem around the nation, and then think of its necessary personal and professional impact upon the managers of government. It was a very serious question for many of them, probably the majority of them.

But these influences were also at work in the White House staff. So what are we saying? Are we creeping up on the word "loyalty"? It has to come in at some point. It may be heretical within some segments of the Johnson school to say that loyalty is relative, but I just happen to believe it is, and I believe that my more intimate contacts among the Johnson Cabinet share that feeling.

There is a way to look at this problem almost quantitatively. Several members of that Cabinet were on board for a long, long time. Several, by some readings of man, history and psychiatry, had no business being there. By that I mean that the length of their tenure was a compliment to themselves that may be perhaps larger than life. This too is true of the White House staff. A McGeorge Bundy and a Bob McNamara have certain elementals of belief and past and hopefully future in common. But what I referred to before as administrative cohesiveness as a function of Cabinet prevailed over all of these natural and innate difficulties of psyche and circumstance. To cut down to the root of it I think that quite simply it was an uncommon combination of men, and they did an uncommonly good job, collegially and individually, as a Cabinet. They left a mark. They set a standard. And without being partisan at all, man for man all

you have to do is to look at the present Nixon cabinet and certain answers are suggested.

The other thing, of course, that the Johnson Cabinet had by definition, you mentioned tenure, they had an undue degree of professionalism. They were government pros and they hired other government pros. The continuity of the Kennedy men, so-called, as just one element of this group was useful, very useful in that sense. The best of them, even the middle level of the Cabinet officer and his first and second assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries, I think had an extraordinarily high degree of professionalism which reflected not only the changing currents of government as a career, of life outside of what Dick Neustadt and Teddy White have written about this ability to have one foot in business, for instance, or on the campus and another foot in government. The new mobility of American management, the new recognitions that government did present opportunities and rewards that might not be present in other sectors of the economy, all of these things were a part of the story of the Johnson Cabinet.

One would like to draw what should be logical conclusion, that it was an inspirational body, but I'm not at this moment ready to go that far. One looks at Secretary Finch today and thinks of John Gardner just a few years ago. Finch is responsible for bringing many young men into this government, this administration. John Gardner was responsible for bringing many of us into government in the most general sense. Not Jack Kennedy, not Lyndon Johnson, it was simply that if men like John Gardner were calling us to this particular standard at this particular time it was reason enough to go. Bill Wirtz had that quality about him. So, in a different but a marvelously singular way, did Wilbur Cohen. The real pro! Bob McNamara had it for some people.

And of course the majority of them were figures in their own right, all of these gentlemen that I've just mentioned. I think even Nick Katzenbach became rather widely known beyond his own constitutency. He once jokingly remarked, or perhaps Lydia did, that it was because of his unusual name. But a Ramsey Clark speaking to a university audience is something to behold, a rather remarkable young man. Old John Gronouski.

You think then of the coincidence of Udall and beautification and Mrs. Johnson, and I think Stu Udall became a national figure in his own right. He created his own image of course to a large extent, but he was also greatly helped by circumstance.

Sandy Trowbridge is another remarkable young man discovered within government. Alan Boyd. Arthur Goldberg. They'll all be heard from, continue to be heard from.

So man for man it's a pretty good team to take to any field.

Mc: There is the rather unique element in Mr. Johnson's Cabinet of the retaining of the Kennedy appointees. Really, there were four if you include Mr. McNamara, who was only really out the last year.

M: I'm not word-splitting, but it really isn't that remarkable because one thing dominated, and that was the circumstances. Those circumstances of the tragedy I suppose were a compulsion to unite in Cabinet terms that could have held true for three to six months, but that's what I was referring to before. At the natural time for resignations that did not come, this had to be a two-way process. The one thing that Lyndon Johnson would never, never do is to keep anybody on as a Cabinet member that he didn't think measured up. So as the Cabinet came to appreciate the new President, the new President came to appreciate the old Cabinet. And I really doubt if you could have found a finer collection of men.

That sounds like an exaggeration, but some of us have given it a good deal of thought. There simply aren't that many men of these qualifications around this country. And don't forget that I think seven out of every ten of them at any given time had built their own cadre within their own departments of good men. It was the strength and depth that was so impressive. Defense, Justice department; Justice with all its changes--you could still reach out under the lash of Detroit and find a Warren Christopher, and Warren Christopher can carry any ball up any mountain. And there were many Warren Christophers around government.

So for all its faults, I don't think that they're any greater than any other Cabinet of any period and I suspect that on balance, and you have to come out balancing somewhere, the Johnson Cabinet would emerge as a considerable plus. For example, there is no way to give any one man, even if he be President, full credit for the programmatic advances of government. You can take a chart, as we often did, and look at the quality and quantity of bills passed. Not many of them could have been passed in the form and at the time that they were passed without the muscle and the skill and the dedication of the individual Cabinet members who were accountable. Now some were more politically versed than others. But the Johnson Cabinet, as a political instrument, is a subject for a long talk, and hopefully some day by someone a very careful analysis.

Mc: I'd like to just add a footnote here at this point, that you are preparing some material on the Cabinet--for records of future scholars reading this transcript and they probably should check and refer to that. So we will not go into some areas that you probably will cover more fully.

M: Yes, I hope to go into it as a dissertation for Columbia. I'd also, if I ever do it, like to have a chance of looking over some of these comments.

Mc: They will be available to you.

M: We'll see what the President has to say about that.

Mc: Mr. Maguire, it's one thirty-five, and you told me to tell you and stop you at this point.

(pause)

Mc: Mr. Maguire, since you said we could go on a little bit longer, I'd like to ask you, sort of turning the question around a little bit, we talked about the composition of the Cabinet and their service to Mr. Johnson. I wonder what your feelings would be on Mr. Johnson's view of the various Cabinet members and their service to him.

M: I would assume that the fundamental requirement of a President looking outwards through the Oval Office windows to the sprawl of the federal bureaucracy would simply be to make it responsive to him--it being a beast, sometimes a dragon, and at all times so vast and labyrinthine that it is a formidable exercise in the arts of management.

Lyndon Johnson came to the presidency at a time when the structure of government was being examined as a whole, the examination was somewhat tentative but it is continuing now. We left as part of our legacy the Heineman report. President Nixon now has his own committee scrutinizing the workings of government; that is, largely the Executive Branch. We had onboard as important working members of the administration some notable theorists of government and administration--administration of the institutional structures of our time, John Gardner, preeminent among them; Bob Wood; Harry McPherson. Brookings was looking at this. We had the former director of the Bureau of the Budget move over to Brookings--Kermit Gordon.

That's the broad canvas and one does not want to wield too big a

brush on it, but Lyndon Johnson, if not a captive of governmental circumstance, was certainly affected by them, and I suppose in the presidential succession victimized by them as much as his predecessors.

There are many reasons, and many good reasons, why every Cabinet member is a genius. He is forced to look two ways, maybe three ways, maybe four ways. He represents the President to his constiuency and vice versa. He represents his bureaucracy to the President. We had the normal quotient of occasions where a given Cabinet Secretary would fight a White House policy. I think that the reverse holds true there also. But this is the daily bread and potatoes of working in government, just as it is in the working for Procter and Gamble or the Ford Motor Company or being up at Columbia wrestling with their administrative and institutional problems. There are proposals, counter-proposals, committees, recommendations, etc., etc.

Mc: What about Mr. Johnson's role in a Cabinet meeting?

M: Before I get to the role in a Cabinet meeting, I don't just want to leave that point of the President's priorities hanging. There is probably no way that a President can tolerate a Cabinet member disagreeing directly, and I suppose publicly, with a given policy. When the policy is decided upon, it seems to be still viable in our system or government to expect that the management will enforce and even defend the policy. Now you used the word tenuous before, and I think that line of reasoning I'm pursuing may be becoming more tenuous now than it has in the past. I am going beyond the incidents of a George Humphrey emerging from an Eisenhower Cabinet meeting and issuing dire predictions about the state of the economy. I'm even going beyond cases in our own administration where, for one reason or another, Cabinet members would leak certain matters in their own

interest to the press. I frankly always found this rather difficult to understand, but it did happen and the counter-reaction in the White House was quite strong. But what President Johnson had on his hands was this massive institution of government creaking and groaning probably as much as any other large and accepted institution of the middle sixties, outworn to a certain extent--to critical extents in some of its parts--but being driven from within and without by agents of change.

The thing that impresses me most about the government as represented by the Cabinet or other bodies is that it is alive. It has its antennas up. It does know that problems exist and in a surprising number of cases, it is doing something about them. It is interesting to look at State department. For all its institutional problems, it not only goes on, but on the whole, and it is an awfully important whole, it does a damned good job as an institution.

The idea of HEW is preposterous. There is probably no intellectual or experiential justification for asking one man or one staff or one unit to run health, education, and welfare. Now it's true we've examined the alternatives of splitting that Gargantua up into some parts, and so far we've only examined the possibility. It is still a possibility more than a probability. But there is analysis underway and I'm quite sure that President Johnson encouraged this. He picked the best men he could find. He was very fond of saying that, it's a very simple thing to say; and yet when you delve into some of John Macy's activities and the President's own participation in the selection process, it isn't simple at all. He literally did comb the country for the best men for the job. I suppose only the President could answer the important question as to how he weighed the factors of personal compatibility, but on the record

one can see that he did pick professional managers for some of the toughest jobs in the world, gave them room to roam, kept flexibility, provided encouragement and hopefully inspiration and incentive, and you go on from day to day. There isn't time to pause and theorize and conceptualize.

To go back apiece, in this package of proposals I gave to the President, one of them was a rather radical idea that Professors Richard Neustadt and Dick Fenno come down for a two and a half hour Cabinet meeting and talk to the Cabinet about the Cabinet. I still think it would have been an enormously intriguing meeting, I forget why we didn't do it.

Mc: I'm interrupting a thought.

M: Well, I feel all this is very inadequate. This is getting awfully close to some important staff about the Cabinet, and I simply haven't made up my own mind about it. There are all too many bits and pieces. It needs theory, it needs concepts, it needs a frame of analysis from which you can remove Lyndon Johnson as Lyndon Johnson and Bob McNamara as Bob McNamara. There have to be some staples, some fundamentals on which others can build, because government is a learning process like every other process. And frankly I suppose I have my own unusual prejudices towards the Cabinet, and at this time I just see it slipping back down a slope.

But, again, who knows? It all comes back to, the ultimate truth is that, as I said before, the Cabinet functions if, when, and how the President wants it to. But of course that isn't the whole truth, when I come to think of it. A President really has no business knowing about a Cabinet as an institution if on his staff he has somebody that can think

about the Cabinet as other people think about pacification and about water pollution. That's what you need. That's what we need. I would still think that the fundamentals of my experience hold true. There are good and useful things that can be done with the Cabinet as an instrument of government that are not being done now.

I was greatly intrigued of course by the idea of President Nixon taking the Cabinet to Camp David. I would even put a full stop there. That's a smart move. That's smart for esprit, for administrative coherence, for publicity, for the President, and for the Cabinet, and their wives. And everybody in all the different departments. That's a good move.

But what does seem to have happened is that there was actually some decisive give and take at that table. And from some of the other articles appearing, it seems that the same thing might hold true in the Cabinet Room of the White House. The people are actually arguing at the Cabinet table about welfare policy, arguing--an advocate and his opposition. And if that's true--and my instincts tell me it's true for now, in other words that it won't last--when the storm flags go up by the nature of the American presidency as one branch of a multifaceted government--argument will stop.

Mc: Did Mr. Johnson's attitude towards his Cabinet change any from your initial contact with him until the end? And I'm specifically thinking of progressive developments in Vietnam--I should say progressively developing, more severe, involved time.

M: I wouldn't want to say what Lyndon Johnson's attitudes were on any subject at any given time.

Mc: I think this could be carried out in, say, the frequency of the meetings.

M: No. There was no mechanical or administrative change at all. In fact, I suppose my reading of it, in answer to a question that leaves me a little unsure, is that the collegial role of the Cabinet was not at all effective. In fact, if anything, the only change would have been to magnify the importance of the Cabinet. You're speaking of Viet Nam. Well, the simple record of the agendas will show you that Viet Nam came up increasingly often, and with increasing variations thereon. David Lilienthal would come in and give a report to the Cabinet. Bob Komer would come back from Vietnam and talk about pacification programs. These are apart from the NSC regulars. At practically every Cabinet meeting we had a briefing by Secretary Rusk. This is to bring his colleagues abreast of developments in Paris. We had the field commanders come in. We had General Westmoreland come in and report.

Mc: Was there an emergence of a dovish opinion in the Cabinet?

M: I don't know why I'm ducking it. Obviously there had to be because the Cabinet is a microcosm of government which in itself is of the nation. Yes, we had people at the Cabinet table who would probably represent every faction of the table downstairs in the White House Mess, or in the President's bedroom. Let's come right out and put it that way. After all, just before the March 31st speech you did have the now famous meeting of the wise men; and if Lyndon Johnson was reaching all over the country to bring in the best counsel he could get on this one instance of the bombing pause, he certainly wanted to hear the same opinions from his Cabinet.

Mc: And this didn't alter his reception to Cabinet meetings and Cabinet sessions?

M: I'm tempted really to say not at all. It sounds too simple, but as long

as you're not asking me to read his personal attitudes, then I will go with that. Institutionally there was no change in the negative; there was a change in the positive where Vietnam became much more a topic for Cabinet discussion. That had to be all to the good.

Yes, we were going through the John Gardner-Bob McNamara period. Yes, there was a certain fuzzing of the atmosphere, but this is the President's business--this is not the Cabinet Secretary's business, nor is it probably the business of any member of his staff. So long as the Cabinet was gathering in its accustomed circumstances with the opportunity to say anything they wanted to say to the President, then the situation was fundamentally healthy.

Now, having said that that was their greatest opportunity, you come to one of the most important questions of all--did the Cabinet avail themselves of the opportunity This will be one of the great questions of any writing of a scholastic nature done on the Johnson Cabinet. Without delving into it there are great inhibitions on any Cabinet member who holds what you refer to as a "dove" philosophy or dove attitudes.

It may be argued that the Cabinet table is the last place in the world where you want to raise these things. If you want to question, discuss, challenge presidential policy, and there was always policy, it was an agreed-upon administration policy, then wouldn't you have to say the same thing that our old friend Jesse Jones and McAdoo and other Cabinet members have said down through the years of the different administrations? In other words, "I don't choose to bring this subject up at this table." In fact, this would be the last place in the world. Why bring it up? Why not go and talk about it with the President, his

door is always open. Let's be practical and politically pragmatic about it. Why do you want to infect the rest of your colleagues? Is that part of your foreseen mandate, obligations, or privileges as a member of the Cabinet? I suppose it is. But you have to be aware of the dimensions of what you are grappling with. If Secretary X expresses, let's again fall back on this dove line at a Cabinet meeting, Secretary Y may be quite likely to go out and talk to the press about it, and Secretary X knows about that contingency. That just happened to be the way this Cabinet worked. Or, very frankly, a White House staffer in the meeting would stroll over to the Sans Souci and talk about it to Joe Kraft or Evans and Novak. And these are the dimensions that I think most probably all of these Cabinet secretaries saw, and saw as inhibitions. Frankly, some of them have indicated to me that there were some rather tough Cabinet meetings, and the toughness came for them when, as one of them said, "I had to sit there and listen to all of that guff."

Well, the quick retort is "What do you mean, you had to sit there and listen to it! The President went around the table at every damned meeting, and he asked you for your opinion, and you were one of the only twelve-thirteen men that he is going to ask. Why didn't you say something?" But that's not really the question. Because there are many, many good reasons why they "had to sit there and listen to that guff," only some of which I've indicated.

Mc: Was it in reference to Vietnam.

M: Yes, certainly.

Mc: Was there any feeling among Cabinet members that the staff was any sort of a stumbling block to the President?

M: There were isolated incidents, and I suppose you always have to have a certain number of them in any relationship between any presidential staff and any Cabinet. I don't think any of them ever became serious, The President referred to it twice that I can recall, on both occasions, separated by about a year, in very strong terms about his Cabinet; that he wanted no White House staff member ever to come between himself and his Cabinet. And of course any Cabinet member could pick up the direct line to the President at any time; he didn't have to go through us.

But, as I said, it's politics. It's intense, it's quarrelsome by definition and by practice. It's pulling and hauling. It's personal and psychological. You make some friends, some excellent friends, some lifelong friends, and some people, Cabinet members will always be neuters to you.

Mc: How was it determined who was there and who was not there, attending the meeting?

M: Cabinet members as a group of course were always invited. Right beneath them we had speakers on special presentations, such as Bill Driver. Bod Wood would be invited to come along with Secretary Weaver to speak on a given subject. Bill Gaud, Sarge Shriver, agency heads and other principals in government. Warren Christopher because of the Detroit involvement and other matters. Cy Vance. These people would all be scheduled on the agenda. So you would have Cabinet principals and participants, they were participating in the meeting.

The next level down would be people in that sort of strange netherworld of White House, non-White House; some members of the National Security Council; Francis Bator; John Macy should always be brought in; Charlie Horsky on District affairs, when he was there, should be brought in.

And then there was the staff. This varied, I would think, on a quarterly basis. The President would change his emphasis--not his mind, but his emphasis. Sometimes you would have as many as ten staffers--I guess that was the tops--and the average would be the top four or five Special Assistants. We did from time to time have expressions of the President's wishes either given directly to me or to Marvin, or to Bob Kintner in his time, that he thought the room was simply too crowded; and sometimes it did look crowded, it literally did. People would bring charts and they'd bring two people to help them with the charts. Anytime DOD showed up you'd always have four aides around you all morning, bugging you, and then you'd have to get them out of the Cabinet Room or else they'd sit on chairs along the wall. I finally devised a rather simply sliding rule--yardstick--that apart from the key White House staffers and the periphery, the Macys and people like that, we would invite only the White House staff members who had a specific interest in the subject under discussion. And in some cases I even went so far as to say "You are invited for this part of the discussion only." It worked rather well because that way we did get around, eventually, to the whole White House staff as limited participants in the Cabinet meetings and process.

There was, it should be said, a considerable cachet to Cabinet meeting attendance. I remark upon it only because I think it was somewhat inflated. There is some normality involved in this, particularly for people who work in the EOB or out of the President's immediate orbit. There is a natural cachet to a Shriver or a Driver or a Bill Gaud--that's important to him, it helps him; and of course that's one reason why we would invite them. But beyond that, and I suppose more on the White House immediate staff level than anything else, your phones would start ringing the night before and then all morning long of the Cabinet meeting with

people wanting to know why they weren't invited. They never called and said, "Am I invited?" It was always "Why wasn't I invited?" And by the nature of the Cabinet Secretary's job that responsibility seems to fall on your head, whereas it really is on the President's head. He personally okayed the name of everybody who attended every Cabinet meeting. He, the President. Not me, not Marvin, not Jim Jones. The President would have on his desk the morning of the Cabinet meeting the final attendance report, suggestions from me. Some he would strike out, and sometimes he'd just check the whole list. But interestingly enough he never checked the page, he checked name by name by name by name. If there were thirty names on it, with all participants and everything, there'd be a checkmark by every name. Sometimes you wish you had one of those sheets to show people who came charging around, all upset about "not being invited to the Cabinet meeting."

Mc: Who were generally the staff members included at those meetings?

M: As I said, we'd go with the top five. Rostow always; Cater; McPherson; Califano. And I guess they were always automatic invitations. Then we would have somebody like DeVier Pierson come in on farm policy or regulatory agency policy. When Ernie Goldstein came in because he had a--well, there was a little bit of a difference, so Ernie was a case to be considered meeting-to-meeting. The legislative office--Manatos and Sanders--were inevitably invited, simply because every Cabinet meeting had a report on legislative process. Substitutions had to be cleared through me. Sometimes the President would not accept substitutions. Then we would try and hit on a rotating basis, which is the way I explained this to the President and he agreed to do it. Califano had four very bright and hard-working young men with him, but you can't bring them all to each meeting, so you rotate. The writers were frankly the most prima donna-ish

of the whole group. Attending a Cabinet meeting was one of the biggest things that could ever happen to them. Well, if you could arrange it, that was fine. So we did. We'd have them in, one by one by one. The same with the NSC staff. Ed Hamilton, Spurgeon Keeney, people like that. Sometimes people would call up and suggest that so-and-so hasn't been to one ever, or he had been working on this area and then we'd handle it that way. Larry Levinson with Califano became quite familiar in Cabinet Room surroundings, whereas before, I don't think he ever attended at all.

Mc: What about Christian?

M: Well, the press office switched off themselves. We finally even dropped them from the list because three men were running it--Christian, Johnson, and Fleming or Lloyd Hackler, and they would simply have a representative there. Or if they didn't, five minutes after it broke up they'd phone me for an over-the-phone report because they had to let the press know what went on.

Of course sometimes we would bring the press in for the last ten minutes or five minutes. Photographers would come in for their usual two minutes every second meeting and then be rushed out. But we did some good work with the press. We had Max Frankel and a lady--I've forgotten--as pool members, who sat in on I guess two-thirds of one meeting, which was quite good.

This is getting into another whole aspect of it, the Cabinet and the press. In the early days, '64, '65, early '66, it was more often than not the case that Cabinet members would talk to the press upon leaving the Cabinet meeting. This can be a very useful device for a President until it begins to backfire, plus, in our case, the press began to think they

were being fed and manipulated and bamboozled. I suppose you can just say that there's a small piece of truth on each side.

Okay?

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview III]

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Charles M. Maguire
Donor

10 July 1977
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

July 20, 1977
Date