INTERVIEW IX

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INTERVIEWEE: HARRY McPHERSON

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

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M: These are really tremendously exciting years [1958-59]. One of them I always thought was as spectacular a year of achievement for Johnson as I could remember. He was really playing the Senate like [Arturo] Toscanini playing the NBC Orchestra; everything seemed to be at his command and he seemed to be able to deal with Eisenhower and with the Democrats in the Senate and with Bill Knowland and many difficult problems.None of them were softies, but he seemed to be able to deal with them so expertly and with such command that you would have thought he was already president. And then came 1959, which is a year of very mixed results and an awful lot of criticism of Johnson coming from the liberal side. It had been there before. It was always there with Joe Rauh and Walter Reuther and Herbert Lehman and Paul Douglas, but it now began to spread to a number of other people, and it included a lot of his own senators now in this new class of men who were elected in 1958.

So there were two tremendously interesting years, one with a majority of two in the Senate, and one with a much larger one. I see Horace Busby's reflection that the problems came because of the larger majority, because they no longer had the discipline of the tight majority. Everybody didn't have to stick together anymore. I guess that's so--in fact, I'm sure it's so--but rather more simply, there were the problems of having a lot of younger, liberal men, most of them not accustomed to being even congressmen or senators for a very long time, not accustomed to "going along in order to get along," coming from governors' offices, lieutenant governors' offices, in some cases even mayors' offices, from business, all kinds of roles. Not all of them by any means [were] anti-LBJ; in fact, most of them were on his side on most issues. But they were not as inclined to get into file as the old boys were. They didn't have as many of the obligations in that network of obligations that the Senate is over time. They came in fresh.

G: Did Johnson perceive this at the time? Do you think he was aware of this?

M: I remember him being reported to be, and at that time I certainly didn't have any tête-à-têtes with him. But I remember him being reported to be not at all enamored by this new class. He thought he ought to work on them, and he did; he got them down to the Ranch and all that. But I think he probably viewed them with a fair amount of, not trepidation, but at least a reserve. He wasn't quite sure which way they would come out. He had the power; to them, he must have seemed almost all-powerful. But to him, they

were rather loose cannons on the deck. When Bill Proxmire, who had been almost a toady at the beginning, as Dick Neuberger said to him in an astonishingly candid response to one of Proxmire's speeches, "No one buttered up the Majority Leader the way you did. He got me to give you my seat on the Agriculture Committee" and so on. Proxmire, having done all that, for him to flip--and then there was word that Ed Muskie was sore because of committee assignments and so on. So no doubt throughout this 1959 year you sensed Johnson being fired at.

My guess is it was a combination of two things: one, the natural problems of trying to be king-daddy leader over a group of individuals who don't really want to yield all their autonomy to a king-daddy leader; and, I should think, a very strong feeling among the out-of-the Senate blocs of interests and Democrats that they didn't want Lyndon Johnson to be president or to be the Democratic nominee. He didn't represent the kind of Democratic Party that the AFL-CIO and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and a number of liberal groups wanted to see. Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt was not for Lyndon Johnson; Herbert Lehman was not, Paul Butler was not, and so on. And they were firing away at him. This image that was before the country of the second most powerful man, the brilliant Lyndon Johnson, the superb leader and so on, had to be chopped down to size.

G: You were talking about the committee assignments. I wonder to what extent the fight over Rule 22 in 1959 triggered Johnson to keep Proxmire off the Finance Committee and Muskie off the committee that he wanted, and in turn triggered some of the retaliations of Proxmire.

M: Oh, I'm sure it didn't help. It probably played a part in it. That was kind of a savage fight, that 1959 fight. Everybody was looking at 1960; Rule 22 was sort of the talisman, where you came out on that.

G: Johnson actually adjourned the Senate.

M: That's right. Joe Rauh said something, I forget, particularly scornful of Johnson, called him something like racist or something like that, that he found it hard to countenance. But I would guess that that had a role in those fellows not being assigned to the committees they wanted.

G: Do you think he would have put Proxmire on the Finance Committee if Proxmire hadn't done that, given the depletion allowance and all?

M: I kind of doubt it, unless Proxmire had pretty well pledged his allegiance on that issue. Gene McCarthy, who was on Finance, was a steady vote for the depletion allowance. And I think any time the conservative majority was willing to consider somebody for the Finance Committee, he had to be all right on that question.

G: I'd heard it said that Johnson would let an opponent go on a committee as long as he felt there was a sufficient majority to keep the other--

M: Well, that one was kind of close. The Republicans were okay, but if you had a big Democratic majority, then the ratio on the committee would become heavily tilted to the Democrats, and what had seemed like a comfortable majority might begin to give way. And you could get a couple of Republicans, like a George Aiken or a [Ralph] Flanders--I'm not sure how they voted on depletion--but people who didn't have much of a stake in it, didn't get a lot of oil and gas money in the election, and they just might turn around and vote against you. So you had to have enough there.
(Interruption)

M: But otherwise, this was a watershed year in American politics, in my view, and I guess in everybody's. You converted a very narrow majority that pretty much had to toe the line with Eisenhower, had to vote with him, because in the 1958 Senate, as it had been for a long time, the majority was only a couple, forty-nine to forty-seven, and a good part of that forty-nine was southern and conservative, or western and conservative. They were inclined to be pro-Eisenhower, pro-Republican in their voting on a lot of economic issues. And suddenly you go from that to a much more liberal Senate.

Its effectiveness and power was felt not so much in 1959 and 1960, because in those years even though the majority was much expanded, it wasn't large enough to overcome a veto. In 1959, as we'll talk about later, a lot of the fussing between Johnson and the liberals in the Senate and the Paul Butlers and others outside was about whether the Democrats should come forward with their own strong program, frequently very expensive program, sure to be vetoed, vetoes sure to be sustained, and nothing to have happened but a record made. Or whether they should trim their programs down to something that might pass with a bigger majority and either escape a veto or be capable of overriding a veto if it should come, because yes, it would garner more people, more middleroad people. That was a big fight, whether to make a fist at Eisenhower or to keep the hand extended in friendship. That issue was constantly forced on the Senate and on Johnson in 1959 and 1960 as it hadn't been in 1958 before the election.

But the real effect of the election, even greater than in 1959 and 1960, much greater, was to come later on in the sixties when the Great Society programs were offered and you had this huge class of senators. That class, the 1946 class, had been elected in 1946 in opposition to Truman and Roosevelt, had been reelected with Ike in 1952; it was a weak bunch of sisters. There was John Marshall Butler from Maryland and people like that, really inconsequential fellows. They were all wiped out [in 1958] and in came a class of people--Phil Hart, Ed Muskie, Gene McCarthy--who would vote for the Great Society and provide the subcommittee chairmanships. They were the captains and the colonels, if not the generals, of that huge surge in legislation.

That was a great year, a watershed year, 1958, and brought in a lot of people of wonderful quality. It was really refreshing being around the Senate in 1959, despite all the problems that were being threatened and in some cases deposited on Johnson's door by these new liberals. It was wonderful to get to know people like Ed Muskie and Phil Hart. They were just people of such wonderful quality and intelligence and decency and good

humor that it was great for a young staff guy.

G: This choice that Johnson I guess would have to make over and over again, as you described, of whether or not to build a record, knowing that the legislation would be vetoed and that nothing at all would be done to solve a problem, or trying to get as much as you could--how did Johnson arrive at this decision on each vote? Is this something that he would do with the committee chairmen or the Policy Committee? How did he come up with a formula for getting as much as you could pass?

M: That's a very good question, and I was looking here at a couple of issues where his choice was surprising to me. I remembered it, I remember it now, but it remains surprising. But when you look at it, it was typical of the way Johnson operated. When the big recession of 1958 was on, when unemployment was high, businesses were closing, Eisenhower and George Humphrey, the secretary of Treasury, were saying, "Keep cool. Don't spend. Don't be reckless." The Democrats were saying, "You're heartless. Let's get out there." It became the great issue of the day; it was a classic economic election. The Democrats under Johnson came forward with resolutions urging the government to accelerate civil and military spending. In other words, wherever there's money in the pipeline to go into projects, and it's going to be spent six months from now or next year, spend it now. Get the steam shovels and the bulldozers out there now, if they're going to be out there six months from now. Let's put men to work. That kind of legislation became the hallmark of the Democrats in 1958.

There is a resolution referred to in these notes, at the start of 1959, commending the President for having done this, what he was told to do by the law that the resolution had passed, commending him for doing it and then urging that additional stuff be done. In other words, instead of saying whereas the Republican Administration has failed to listen to the cries of the poor, and whereas the Republicans have failed to spend the money that was there to be spent and put men to work and all the things like that, therefore we condemn them for doing this, which would be the classic partisan formulation: "Let's beat up on these guys. We've been through this recession and we won a lot of seats as a result of their inability to cure the recession, so let's drive the stake in their heart here at the beginning of 1959," and so on to make it even worse. Johnson's idea was just the opposite; it was to say, "Wonderful, Ike, go right ahead, and then let's do a little more." His vote was 93 to 2 instead of being 55 to 40, something like that, on a big partisan issue, something that the administration would have dug its heels in on. He made it something that the whole Senate would vote for. It was his view, publicly expressed, that the country wanted to have progress and they didn't want to have the parties fighting with each other, let's get everybody together.

I'm sure another large part of it was his feeling that the country, while it had just elected a lot of Democrats to the Senate, was still devoted to Dwight Eisenhower, and to pass something that attacked him would be futile. It wouldn't get you any money spent any faster; it wouldn't help the unemployed, and it would just alienate a very large number of people, particularly Texans.

I say particularly [Texans] only [because] that throughout here there is running a theme of Johnson's need to protect his power base, his political base in Texas, a base that had always been in the center of the Democratic Party down there, that was itself threatened by the very liberal people but had to be regarded as essentially moderate-conservative. Yet he had to protect that base while being the national Democratic leader. [It was the] same problem he had as president in those days when John Connally used to wring his hands and tell him that boys like [Bill] Moyers and McPherson and [Joseph] Califano and so on were leading Johnson straight into hell without a return ticket. It was always that threat: a) be sure that while you remain a vigorous leader of the Democrats, you don't do anything that puts you in a direct popularity contest with Dwight Eisenhower; and second, don't do anything that will crack your base in Texas and make people begin to think that you've drifted off and have joined the labor unions or the blacks in pursuit of this will-o-the-wisp, the presidency.

Now let me ask you some questions about this.

G: Okay.

M: Looking through these 1958 and 1959 [chronologies], there are so many things that must have been explored by the historians of Johnson that I am reminded that I didn't understand at the time and I still don't understand:

A) Why did Lyndon Johnson take off so frequently from Washington, from where he was the maestro of the Senate and the paragon of political skill and all that; why did he take off so often and go to Texas? And unannounced vacations, impromptu vacations, just simply staying for a week, ten, fifteen days sometimes, while the Senate kind of wallowed around? What was in his mind?

B) Why does George Reedy write him memos about resigning as majority leader? Were those reflections on what Johnson had said to Reedy in conversations, that "I think I will resign," and if so, why? Was it in order to go run for president? Did he want out of the job of majority leader because he was unappreciated or there was too much heat and pressure or he might die of a heart attack? Did he genuinely want out or does he want to threaten to go out and then be asked back? He's told by somebody here, George or someone, "Don't do that," when the suggestion is made that he resign and there may be a caucus and they'll vote him back in, and someone says, "It will just make Proxmire a martyr."

C) How serious was his planning and thought during this period of 1958-59 about the presidency in 1960? Jim Rowe [was] constantly writing these memos urging him to go ahead and do it. I know Jim and Tommy Corcoran and others were often coming into the office, and Jim must have been talking to every kind of political leader.All that said, I still had the feeling in 1960 when the effort was launched in that speech in the Dirksen Building, of an almost convulsively naive undertaking in which there was suddenly just an eruption: "Well, okay, let's go," [with] no one ready, the bases not touched, none of the groundwork that Kennedy had laid, none of the long work in the field.

D) Was he in touch with local politicians over the country? The answer obviously is yes. But that answers too much and too little. Did he have any kind of real base, people out working with the sort of regulars who show up in the county conventions and state conventions? Was there a real Johnson faction being launched or attempted as early as 1958-59?

I wrote in my book [***A Political Education***] about finding one day on the Senate [floor] in Johnson's desk--I would go to clean out his effects at the end of the week and pick up things that would be useful to the Library, and a lot of stuff that would just be useful to me, because I'd find memos from other people that it turned out would be very useful for me to know. Kennedy had been using his desk. I know I'm getting ahead of 1959 here to the next year, to 1960. But Kennedy had been using the desk, managing a bill. Johnson had vacated it to let Kennedy do that. And I found this memorandum, I guess of probably eighty or ninety pages, in a hard binder with "Indiana" on the front, and looked into it, and there was a detailed analysis of the political situation in Evansville and all kinds of--Indianapolis--towns, all the politicians of the labor unions; who mattered, who didn't, and it was all Kennedy's organization. I started to send it to Johnson, and then I thought, well, hell, it's too late and they'll never do anything with it. It's not going to help them. So I followed the course of honesty and returned it to Kennedy, thinking that the course of cunning would have been futile.

Anyway, those are these things that come through here: his absences in Texas; his talking about quitting as majority leader and George Reedy talking to him; his off-again, on-again talk about running for the presidency. They're things that maybe don't have any clear answers because he didn't know himself.

G: Did you sense any of this? Did you sense, for example, that he was being away from Washington an abnormal amount?

M: Well, he was. I mean, so it seemed to me. I didn't know what normal was at the time. I figured maybe other senators were away that much, too. Bob Byrd is never away that much now. Mike Mansfield was never away that much. Johnson was like--again, to use a musical analogy--a [Herbert] Von Karajan. He flies into Berlin. He spends three weeks whipping the orchestra into frantic shape. They put on four spectacular nights of Beethoven and Wagner that just blow the minds of the musical world, whereupon he's off, gone back to his chalet in Switzerland, or wherever, and you don't see him again in Berlin for a long time. He's not a bureaucrat; he is an artist, and he comes in and he runs the Senate and runs everybody at fifty miles an hour. Every day something interesting was happening; Johnson was making a statement or cranking something up. As I look at a lot of these issues, I remember a lot of them that seemed quite major at the time, and they were gone two or three days later, and now it's only on papers like this that anybody could possibly remember them. They seemed very significant.

One other thing that really strikes me, and that is that there really is an enormous amount of truth in the charge, the belief, that people had during the Johnson presidency

that Johnson was unprepared in the foreign policy area. In that he was not unlike Harry Truman, who didn't spend much time thinking about it either. But you see, Johnson makes a lot of the outer-space program, makes a lot of the Open Skies proposal with Russia, makes a lot, and knows a lot about preparedness. But [he didn't have] an interest in foreign affairs, in some foreign affair for its own sake and for its ultimate--something that was not just the nose-to-nose confrontation with the Soviets in size of military force. Even when it came to the Middle East, it was just not there in Johnson. I would regard Johnson on the one hand, and somebody like Pat Moynihan and Bruce Babbitt, the governor of Arizona today, as almost polar opposites when it comes to politicians who are intellectuals. Moynihan and Babbitt, while they are always looking for ideas to put into practice and have put a lot of them into practice, certainly into legislative proposals and many of them into statutes, are interested in a lot of the world for its own sake. Everything doesn't have to have a political purpose in order to be taken into their minds.

With Johnson it's almost the opposite. Almost everything's got to have some practical utility; he really is a utilitarian when it comes to the absorption of information about the world. I remember one time--I forget what he was doing in the Senate, I think he was majority leader; it may have been one of these years--when a friend said, "The leader of the largest party in India other than the Congress Party is here, a very distinguished man, and he'd like very much to see Majority Leader Johnson."I asked Johnson if he would spend half an hour with this guy. I got back a note saying--I found this note the other day and found this little memo--the note said, harried, handwritten, "Sure got my hands full. Sorry. LBJ." Well, I don't know what he was doing that day. What he was probably doing was trying to raise hell with the air force for closing down some air base in Texas, or wondering whether he and Mary Margaret [Wiley Valenti] and Bill Brammer or whatever could go to McAllen and make a talk about the agriculture laboratory or something like that. He was very much a Texas politician, making sure his base was okay and all his people were touched down there, and interested in the practical American government use of anything, any proposal--how can we use it here in the government?--and almost not at all in the world overseas for its own sake.

G: Did he seem less likely to go to diplomatic functions or embassy parties than the other senators? Were there other manifestations of this?

M: I don't know. I can't even answer that question, I don't know.

G: It's odd, because when he became vice president, of course, he--

M: He went to a lot of them.

G: Yes. Well, he traveled abroad so much.

M: Well, he did, that's right. That's right. When you don't have anything else to do, when you don't have to keep up your political base in Texas, and you don't have to run the Senate and preside over a lot of stuff, then at least it's something to do. It also fills up a hole that I'm sure many people called to his attention, that "you really don't know much

about the outside world." Ike obviously did. Nixon was always interested in it. Kennedy did. I mean, here was Kennedy making extremely well-thought-out and passionately-delivered speeches on Algeria in the late fifties. [That was] inconceivable for Johnson. And it had a curious effect. It not only put Kennedy on the right side of that issue, but it gave people cause to think of him as somebody who would lead the United States in the world, could lead the United States in the world.

G: Whose lead did Johnson follow in foreign policy matters then? Was it [J. William] Fulbright?

M: Well, curiously, I guess it was Fulbright. Curiously, because I think they were very close; they were very close friends in those days. The Johnsons and the Fulbrights were personally close, and it was only in the mid-sixties when the combination of Vietnam and the Dominican Republic began to draw them apart that they split. Johnson's foreign policy was very largely what today we would regard as Scoop [Henry] Jackson foreign policy, leaving out the Soviet Jewry business. I mean, it was cold war: be tough; build up the military base, be prudent, don't go get into something that you don't have any business getting into. That was certainly Scoop Jackson's view. How to reconcile that with Bill Fulbright's? Well, in those days they didn't seem so far apart.

G: When Proxmire made this speech in 1959, one of the arguments that he made was that it was Johnson himself who was deciding what legislation would pass in what form; that really the Policy Committee was actually a rubber stamp and that Johnson was actually passing or advancing the legislation in what form he wanted it to be in. On the other hand, you hear the criticisms of Johnson that he had no political philosophy of his own; that it was basically what he thought the majority would support. Now, how do you take these two views and--?

M: Well, he was *primus inter pares* in the Policy Committee and in any of the councils of the Democrats. He was first among equals. But he was among equals, and he recognized that while he could bully a little and persuade and offer the stick as well as a carrot, that he had to be careful. He was dealing with people who had been elected to the Senate and considered themselves important figures on the national scene, to some degree, who had egos and who you might not need this week but you would the week after. So he didn't just swagger through and say, "Boys, we're going to do it this way or that way."

Incidentally, the Policy Committee--I was its counsel for several years, and this is true of Johnson as well as during the Mansfield days--the Policy Committee didn't really decide the shape of all kinds of legislation, its control was in scheduling.For the most part it did, if it agreed to schedule a bill, and some bills that Johnson had hoped it would schedule it didn't.

G: Really? Can you recall any examples of that?

M: I don't, but I do remember--at least it didn't for the time being. Johnson was several times delayed if not altogether rejected by the committee. Usually Senator [Robert] Kerr would

just say, "I'd like that to go over, Mr. Chairman," and that big rumbling voice of Kerr's would be pretty much enough to do it. [Richard] Russell would do that--

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M: Russell would do that some.

G: How about [Carl] Hayden?

M: No. No, not by then. Nor [Lister] Hill, nor Mansfield.

G: [James] Murray was on there, too.

M: Yes, but he was an old man who didn't have a lot of--he was on because he had a liberal voting record, but he was really not much of a figure at all.

G: It's odd; Montana had two people on the Policy Committee.

M: Well, Mansfield later sat in because he was the whip, succeeding [Earle] Clements.Kerr and Russell and [Warren] Magnuson, who would in a winsome way say, "Gosh, Mr. Leader, couldn't we put that over? I'm trying to work something out here," and that sort of thing. The four of them, Kerr, Russell, Magnuson and Johnson, were the four active wheelerdealers. There was kind of an informal policy committee that included [John] Pastore, [Clinton] Anderson, and maybe a couple of others I'm not thinking of, who would be talked to rather constantly to make sure they were okay. There were some people you just didn't want to run afoul of; they were part of the team. There were others you could never do enough for.

But while Johnson was the leader and he had a program and there were things that he wanted, he didn't always have a wish list or a command list. Among other things, you just don't want to have to ask people all the time to do something for you. If you can let things kind of float and let them go on down the stream without your pushing them and having to ask somebody else to help push them, that's fine. It's a help.

G: Then you think Proxmire's view of the Policy Committee as basically a rubber stamp for Johnson was distorted?

M: Well, I think Proxmire was complaining. The unsound part of his complaint was that Johnson was orchestrating everything that the Senate did as far as the legislative program was concerned without anybody else's intervention, yea or nay. The truth is that it was sort of a general leadership decision that Johnson was quite content with. But it wasn't something that he forced down anybody's throat, Policy Committee or others; it just happened. The legislation got reported out; he took it up, sooner or later.

The sound part of his criticism, I think, is that Johnson, through his chairmanship of the Policy Committee, his chairmanship of the Steering Committee--that is, the

assignments to committees--his large staff in the Policy Committee and elsewhere in days before people had large staffs, just the horsepower that was available to him: his command of appointments to the Naval Academy Board of Visitors, to attend the Telecommunications Conference in Rio, having the ability to send somebody to such an event, all that gave him a degree of influence over what happened in the Senate that Proxmire found oppressive. And so did a lot of other people. As a consequence, ever since then, ever since 1960, there's been a much greater diffusion of power in the Senate.

G: You mentioned the Steering Committee. Did LBJ tend to make the committee assignments himself or was that subject to the give-and-take of the whole committee? Was there actual give-and-take if so, or was it--?

M: I don't know. I never went to a Steering Committee meeting. My feeling of Lyndon Johnson's mind is a feeling of an extremely good--I'm looking at a very good computer that has built into it an awful lot of information and an ability to foresee the consequences of a very large number of events in the alternative. That is, if we put Gillette on X committee and take McPherson off of that committee and put him on Y, then that will make room for So-and-so and I can get Such-and-such to drop this, whatever. He really was very, very gifted in foreseeing, which is what makes the Vietnam War such a ghastly anomaly.

G: Did he ever talk to you about these decisions? For example, would he ever sit down and lay out one, two, three why he had appointed or planned to appoint somebody to such-and-such a committee?

M: No. At this time I was earning my wings with him. He was at the point where he thought I did a pretty fair job on the floor and I could give him some good advice about this or that. But I remember when I wrote a long memo before he made Mike Mansfield his whip, urging that he do that. I'd worked with Mansfield a good deal on matters. And when he made him the whip, I thought Johnson was going to come around and say, "What a great memo." But he never said a word and my guess is that he had beat me to that idea by quite a long time. So no, he never did.

G: The other attack that Proxmire made was based on the fact that there weren't any caucuses other than one caucus at the opening of each session of Congress. You've been following the Congress and Senate for many years now. How valid was Proxmire's point here? Should there have been more frequent [caucuses]?

M: Well, it's very much the voice of one part of any party, of any faction, wanting a broadening of the group that determines what the policy of the faction shall be. And the other side says, "God Almighty, every time we do that we either get hopelessly bogged down in disputes [or] we go off in all kinds of directions, and we become subject to all kinds of one-on-one politicking, if not simply of hollow rhetoric that does us no good."

So "Yes," says Proxmire, "let's have more caucuses so more people get in on the act, and we have a democratizing and it permits the fellows from the"--democratizing in

every sense, including a leveling, because in a caucus Dick Russell and Bill Proxmire or Lee Metcalf are all just the same. It doesn't matter whether you've been there twentyfive years and are a big chairman or you're a brand-new fellow. You've got a voice in the caucus. If you can persuade everybody else, it's great. Non-caucus policy making is hierarchical; you do it by turning to your leaders in committee, the chairmen and the groups of chairmen, small groups of the powerful. In the caucus you do it by letting everybody have a voice, and if they can outpersuade the others, well, they win, and that becomes party politics.

Here again, you find Johnson trying to tailor to some degree his own politics and inevitably the politics of the Democratic Party in order to maintain his power base in Texas. He doesn't want to let the Democratic Party get too far off to the left, for his own sake. And he doesn't want it to get too far off to the left because if it does and if that becomes the litmus test of being a good Democrat, as Paul Butler would have it in the Democratic Advisory Council, then Dick Russell and Sam Ervin and John Stennis and Olin Johnston and Allen Ellender and Herman Talmadge, even maybe George Smathers and Spessard Holland, all those guys are going to pick up sticks one of these days and move over, and [they'll] either become Republicans formally or they're going to become like a bunch of wives with chastity belts. I mean, you'll never see them again. They'll never cooperate with Democratic leadership because, by God, if that's what it takes to be a Democrat, to hell with being a Democrat.

So it was a very different era. We now have a South that is split evenly in the Senate between Republicans and Democrats. In those days they were still trying to maintain the one-party South.

G: And doing a pretty good job, too.

M: Doing a very good job, yes.

Let me just go over two or three things here I noted, and then we'll draw her up, if that's okay with you. This is [in the] 1959 [chronology], page 14, April 22. It has to do with passing the [John] McClellan bill of rights amendment to the labor reform bill.I'm sure you've had some chance to talk to Jim Wilson about that. He was the author of a memo to Johnson saying--this was after Johnson and Kennedy had been defeated by McClellan, 47 to 46. One of the rights in the bill of rights for labor that McClellan had put forward provided a lot of power for workers to go sue union bosses for deprivation of rights. And Jim Wilson wrote and said, "Well, you know, what you've done here is pass an FEPC law, a Fair Employment Practices Law, under the guise of a labor bill of rights." And the very next day, McClellan, seeing that that was the case, backed up. The wonderful thing about that [is], I remember that evening, as Jim will tell you, Olin Johnston always voted for labor and he did that night against this McClellan bill of rights. And Strom Thurmond, who hated Johnston and was always trying to make trouble for him, ran to the cloakroom and was back on the phone to South Carolina saying, "Olin voted for the labor unions against the bill of rights," and so on. And the next day, of course, Olin was crowing because now he saw that "Don't you understand, I had sense

enough not to do that. Old Strom didn't." It was wonderful.

[Reading from chronology], "May 11, the Texas House [of Representatives] passes the Texas Election Bill, which changed the primary date, after Bob Eckhardt makes a speech against it." Bob Eckhardt was the leader of the liberals in the Texas house. When I got to know him years later, I wondered how he and Johnson would get along. In 1965, I guess, he came to the [U.S.] House [of Representatives] for the first time. He and all the other freshmen legislators were invited with their wives over to the White House for a party, and I talked with him. The House had just voted that afternoon on Adam Clayton Powell, on the question of whether to seat him or not, and Bob Eckhardt had voted to seat him. He said, "You know, you read the Constitution: he is twenty-five years of age; he was elected by the people of his district; he's entitled to his seat. What we do after we seat him is our own business. We can censure him for his behavior, but we're not entitled to keep him out of the House." Well, that was Johnson's view very strongly; he was a strong Adam Clayton Powell supporter.

But I knew that Bob Eckhardt had been against that bill and I knew that he had always been on the liberal side, fighting the kind of centrist faction in Texas, so I kind of raised it gingerly with Johnson that evening back in the Oval Office.I said, "I met Bob Eckhardt today, first time I've met him, and a very attractive guy." Johnson just kind of nodded. I said, "You know, he told me he voted to seat Adam Powell," and I gave the reason why. I said, "That took a lot of guts." Johnson said, "It's blood." And I said, "What do you mean, it's blood?" And he said, "He's a Kleberg," which I thought was fascinating. Bob Eckhardt *is* a Kleberg.

G: Is he? I didn't [know that].

M: And Johnson, of course, had come to the House to work for Congressman [Richard] Kleberg. The fact that he would associate Bob Eckhardt, his political foe, or the foe of his friends in Texas and I guess probably his own foe, the friend of Frankie Randolph and all the liberals in Texas, that he would associate a good thing that Eckhardt had done with blood, and the blood being the Klebergs, was I thought fascinating.

G: Did he elaborate? Did he liken--?

M: No.

G: Did he indicate how Kleberg would have done the same thing?

M: No. He didn't. I didn't pursue it, because he said, "He's a Kleberg," and I knew that Johnson had worked with him.

G: How about the Clare Boothe Luce incident with Wayne Morse?

M: I don't remember much about it. I don't remember how it was handled.

G: Or Johnson's reaction to it?

M: No, I don't. What I do remember very distinctly is the work--and I think I wrote about this in my book--on this Admiral Strauss nomination.

G: Lewis Strauss.

M: You'll find in the Library someplace a memorandum done by me and Jim Wilson.We were given a long time to do it. I say a long time, several days. When the nomination was reported out of the committee and it became clear that there was going to be a furious fight over it--it says here, "LBJ announces that the Democratic leadership will take no formal position on the Strauss nomination." And there was talk that Nixon was trying to persuade people that this was anti-Semitic behavior on the part of Democrats, voting against Strauss. That probably did shake up Johnson a bit, and George Reedy apparently shook him up a little bit more by saying, "That's exactly how it's going to be interpreted by lots of people."

But on the other hand, he had Clinton Anderson, his friend, and the guy that he had a lot of IOUs out to, just absolutely determined to beat Strauss and wanting Johnson's support in every way. So Johnson turned to us, his two young lawyers, and said, "Research this and write me a memo." So we wrote him a memo. It was really good. It's about a twelve-page memo.

G: Do you have a copy? I'll look and see if we do.

M: I don't know where it is.

G: Okay. I'll look and see.

M: I probably do have a copy, yes, somewhere in my whole files. Anyway, about half of it was pro-Strauss. We went into his record, went into the hearings and showed how tendentious had been many of the attacks on him, how specious many of the attacks were, how they really were of no consequence. The other half was very harsh on him and went into many of his responses, showed that while there were a number of questionable things in his career, they probably weren't enough in themselves to warrant his being turned down when Eisenhower had asked for him. The President is entitled to--you know, you've got the presumption on his side. But his behavior toward the Senate and the House, and the members of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy when he was head of AEC, and his behavior in the Senate hearings, was so arrogant as to cause one to believe that he would not understand or follow the tradition of comity between the executive and legislative branches. We didn't have any strong concluding paragraph, I think; I can't remember. Anyway, we sent it to Johnson and didn't hear a thing for days. Then came the day of the vote and somebody said, "God, Johnson's got this memorandum," and he reads the pro-Strauss part to Strauss' enemies and he says, "You want me to vote against a man like this?" Then he reads the con part to Strauss' friends, "You expect me to support a man who treats senators like this?" So he gave himself maximum leeway by making

everybody think he was on the other side, everybody, until the last two or three days, when he was really working fast and furiously to defeat Strauss.

I was looking in here at this vote to override a veto by Eisenhower, only the first time a veto [of his] was overridden. It had to do with the Bath, Maine shipyard wages. Mrs. Margaret Chase Smith had a bill to increase wages at the Bath shipyard and Eisenhower vetoed it, and the Senate overrode the veto. Why would the Senate get together to override a veto on Bath, Maine? Well, only if the Senate Majority Leader is trying to assure that Mrs. Smith, who regarded him as kind of one of the wonders of the world--

G: Really?

M: Yes. She was really mesmerized by Lyndon Johnson, [who was trying to assure] that she stayed put. I'll never forget when her name was called [on the Strauss nomination]. The clerk said, "Mrs. Smith." "No." And Barry Goldwater just burst out with "Goddamn!" (Laughter) You could hear it all over the chamber and everybody burst out laughing.

(Laughter)

Here was the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee and all that, and [she] votes against Strauss, and he was defeated, 49-46. The appropriate cartoon would have had LBJ having Strauss' body placed on Clinton Anderson's desk as a tribute.

G: What else did LBJ do in that vote, do you know, to get Strauss defeated?

M: No, but he really worked hard at it.

G: Did he?

M: Yes, he really did. He put all his resources into it, persuasion. He had to get a few Republicans.

G: I've heard the comment attributed to LBJ that Strauss was so arrogant he could strut sitting down. Did you ever hear that?

M: Yes. Yes, I did.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IX

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Lawyer; b. Tyler, Tex., Aug. 22, 1929; B.A., U. South, 1949; D.C.I. (hon), 1965; student Columbia, 1949-50; LL.B., U. Tex., 1956; admitted to Texas bar, 1955; asst. gen. counsel Democratic policy com., U.S. Senate, 1956-59; asso. counsel, 1959-61; gen. counsel, 1961-63; dep. under sec. internat. affairs Dept. Army, 1963-64; asst. sec. state ednl. and cultural affairs, 1964-65; spl. asst. and counsel to Pres. Johnson, 1965-66; spl. counsel to Pres. Johnson, 1966-69; private practice law, Washington, 1969-.