INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE MEANY

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

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Mu: Let's begin by just identifying you on the tape here. You're George Meany, and you are president of the AFL-CIO and have served in that capacity during the entire Johnson Administration, as well as before.

Me: Yes.

Mu: You don't need to lean into that microphone at all. It'll pick you up sitting back or anything you want to do.

Did you have any contact or acquaintance with Mr. Johnson in his very early years in the Congress in the late 1940's or early 1950's?

Me: No, I did not. He was in the House of Representatives in the late '30's and early '40's, and I did not know him then. He was just a young congressman and, while I was here, I never came in contact with him.

Mu: When did you first become acquainted in a close way with him? Was it while he was Majority Leader of the Senate--in the late '50's?

Me: I would say before that when he first came to the Senate, I got to know him, not very well. I knew who he was. I had met him several times. And my real contacts on what you might call almost a weekly basis really began when he was Majority Leader.

Mu: You were working with him then on legislation of various kinds?

Me: Yes. I had occasion to talk to him many times on our legislative program. Our legislative program covers various areas. You know what I mean--minimum wages, education; and of course we were interested in civil rights and consumer protection, and all those things. So I had quite a few occasions to talk to him when he was Majority Leader.

Mu: Did organized labor have sort of a fixed opinion of Senator Johnson then as either pro-labor or anti-labor?

Me: Yes, I would say that the opinion was mixed; that we did not consider him pro-labor. We considered him fairly conservative at that time, although his early record in the Congress would indicate that as a young congressman he was quite liberal and supported all of President Roosevelt's programs, all the New Deal legislation. But by the time he came back to the Senate, I would say that he was viewed by our people as being much more conservative. This prevailed until he actually became the Majority Leader. His attitude toward the things that we were interested in, I would say, became more favorable as time went. But still it was not that favorable that he was considered in 1960, for instance. He was not considered by our people as the ideal candidate for President. You know, he was a candidate in 1960, and of course lost out in the convention to John F. Kennedy.

When he was selected as Vice President, I'd say there were mixed feelings. I'd say some of our people were quite pleased, but I would say more were displeased than pleased.

Mu: Had Mr. Kennedy asked you about Mr. Johnson's selection?

Me: No, nothing like that. And of course when the campaign started, we supported President Kennedy. Oh, I wouldn't say there was any great opposition to Johnson. But I'd say most of our people in '60 would have preferred someone else as a candidate for Vice President; for instance, Hubert Humphrey was mentioned at the time. But President Kennedy selected his own running mate in Los Angeles after he was successful in getting the nomination. And as I say, when the campaign started there were no more misgivings about Johnson. He was on the ticket, and of course we were very much in favor of the top of the ticket.

Mu: The rank and file didn't give you any trouble as far as the election campaign?

Me: No. I wouldn't say that Senator Johnson's record was anti-labor, but as a senator it was conservative. A lot of the things that we were interested in he did not go along with. But his attitude started to change when he became Majority Leader. Then, of course, when he became Vice President he was no longer active legislatively because while he was interested in a lot of matters before the Congress, the Vice President does not have the same influence in the Congress as does a Majority Leader. Frankly, the senators don't pay too much attention to what the Vice President is doing, and that has prevailed. I'd say it prevails pretty much today. But even when he was Vice President, of course, we weren't pressing him on legislative matters. We did have a number of contacts with him.

Mu: Did Mr. Kennedy use him for anything that involved organized labor--?

Me: Not directly, no. Vice President Johnson was not used directly by the President at the time in labor matters, but of course he was very active in other matters. In fact, this whole space program I think, which was strongly supported by Johnson as Majority Leader, he continued his interest in that as Vice President. I don't recall exactly what the title was, but he was designated by President Kennedy as the head of some sort of--

Mu: The Space Council.

Me: The Space Council for purposes of advancing the space program. But he had played a major part in the program as Majority Leader, and of course as Vice President.

Mu: He and Senator Kennedy, before Mr. Kennedy was President, had worked together on what became finally the Landrum-Griffin bill. Did you have close contact with Mr. Johnson during the passage of that measure that labor wasn't too happy with, I suppose?

Me: No, we were not too happy with it. Actually, the Landrum-Griffin bill was the House bill, and we were in contact with the Majority Leader constantly at that time. I would say that he was very sympathetic at that time to our position on changes in the labor law. We wound up of course with the Landrum-Griffin Act despite the fact that we had very strong support from the Majority Leader against it. And of course, as you know, it finally became law, and we didn't like it--

Mu: Did he make it a better bill in any way in the course of its passage?

Me: I wouldn't put it that way. I'd say that if we did not have his support, the bill would have been more drastically against labor.

Mu: Right. So it was sort of a mitigating influence--

Me: But even as it was, we fought against it in the Senate and lost out by--some of the major provisions of the bill, we lost on a vote in the Senate which resulted in a tie, some of the provisions that we were much opposed to. Vice President Nixon at that time cast the deciding vote, and he cast it against us. But Johnson, who was Majority Leader at the time, was very much with us on that particular episode.

Mu: He was voting your way primarily?

Me: Yes.

Mu: Once the assassination of President Kennedy occurred and Mr. Johnson was suddenly President, how quickly did he contact you?

Me: He contacted me at home the next morning. President Kennedy was assassinated on Friday around 1 o'clock in the afternoon. As you know, they brought his body back here that night. President Johnson--of course he immediately became President--called me quite early, somewhere between 8 and 9 o'clock on Saturday morning, the very next morning, and told me that he had this heavy responsibility,

and that we had to keep moving forward even though we were all certainly grief-stricken and so on. He said that he would be in touch with me just as soon as he could possibly find the time. So of course then President Kennedy's funeral was held then on Monday, and President Johnson addressed the general session of Congress, I think, on Wednesday.

Mu: I believe that's right, yes, sir.

Me: I would say that maybe the following day he called me then and I met him, met him that next morning which would have been just about a week after the assassination. I met him at his home out in Spring Valley. I drove over there early at his invitation, and I rode down to the White House with him in his car, and spent a half-hour or so in the White House discussing the many problems that he was facing. Of course he was very anxious to have the full cooperation of the AFL-CIO, and I would say that he got that cooperation.

I would say that at that point when he had the responsibility thrust upon him as President of the United States, I think that he really went to work with only one idea in mind, that he wanted to be the best President this country had ever seen. And frankly I think that he made the finest record of any President in my lifetime surely.

Mu: You've seen lots of Presidents too.

Me: Yes, I've seen lots of Presidents, and I think he made the finest record insofar as legislation that affected the great mass of the people in this country--beneficial legislation.

Mu: Did he tell you that first meeting that he was going to be a different person from what he'd been as a senator? Did he make any indication that he might change?

Me: He didn't say that. He didn't say it that way, but there was every indication that he was now thinking only of his responsibility to the country as a whole.

Mu: That he wasn't the senator from Texas any more.

Me: That's right. I think that was quite obvious. And as I say, I think that he made a splendid, splendid record from there on.

In the civil rights field, in the educational field, and many, many other fields, he passed a tremendous amount of legislation--a tremendous amount of legislation in all these beneficial fields within almost a year or two after he took office. Now, of course, we supported all those efforts in these educational lines. We were in constant contact with him.

Mu: I was going to ask about that. Was access easy from that point on, you never had any trouble getting your views to him, or getting to see him?

Me: Not at all. No trouble at all. You see, he was one President who realized perhaps more than perhaps any other President the tremendous influence that organized labor has over on Capitol Hill. Now we don't brag about that influence, but it is very definitely there. We of course spend a lot of time and effort in the elections every two years for the Senate and the House, as well as the presidential election. President Johnson was quite aware of this, and he was quite aware of the fact that in some of these liberal measures where a few votes were needed to finally enact the legislation, that our influence in some of these cases could pick up votes that even he couldn't pick up as President because of our close contact with these members of Congress, and very frankly, because we had helped in a very substantial way in electing them. So the contact with President Johnson from that time on was constant. I would say that every week there would be two or three telephone calls and visits. I was in the White House sometimes two and three times a

week, I'd want to see him, or he'd call me. I think that he had a greater knowledge, current knowledge, day-to-day knowledge, of what was going on over on Capitol Hill than any other President ever had. He had a tremendous grasp on what was over there. I can recall him calling me on the telephone on one of the educational bills and telling me just were it was, and when the subcommittee, and how he needed a certain number of votes, how there were one or two votes that were doubtful that he thought I could be helpful and so on and so forth.

Mu: Did he appoint people in the White House who were equally sympathetic with labor?

Me: A good many. I would say that here, again, it was mixed. Naturally, he appointed a lot of people from Texas. He appointed people that he knew quite well, and I would say that a good many of those appointments were very much on the conservative side. But on the other hand he appointed people in the White House that were very, very sympathetic to what we were doing. And of course he himself was sympathetic. And even the people who came into the White House who we had considered conservative, we found out that we had no trouble working with them because they were certainly influenced to a great degree by the President's attitude.

Mu: So even those that might have been conservative otherwise turned out under his influence to be maybe more sympathetic than it had appeared?

Me: Yes. I would say that personally this association lasted right from the minute he became President right up until the time he left here last January.

Mu: One of his first legislative crises the first month after he was President I think, involved the sale of wheat to Russia, which involved important labor considerations. Some of labor at least opposed it.

Me: What happened there in that, before President Kennedy's assassination President Kennedy had agreed to permit the export of several hundred thousand tons of wheat to Russia. And President Kennedy originally wanted to ship all that wheat in American ships. However, there was a cost factor there. It costs more to ship in American ships than it does in these so-called "flags of convenience" that many of them operate on. I think a large reason for that is American sailors get better wages, and it costs more to man the ships and so on. However, because of the cost factor, President Kennedy had finally given orders to proceed with this sale of the wheat with the understanding that no less than 50 percent of this would be shipped in American bottoms.

Mu: President Kennedy had made this--

Me: That was his decision. However, by the time the wheat shipment started the Department of Commerce had issued waivers to American grain companies shipping wheat for all sorts of different reasons. They had waived this 50-50 rule so that shortly after President Kennedy's death, and coming right into the next year, over 75 percent of the wheat was being shipped in foreign ships with the permission of the Department of Commerce despite the commitment made by President Kennedy.

So of course I became very deeply involved in that. President Johnson of course was concerned. You see, what happened, our longshoremen refused to load any more ships so the wheat shipments stopped. But, anyway, we finally worked out with President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk--I got the people to go ahead loading these ships, sending wheat to Russia under an agreement that there would be no more waivers; that the percentage would not get any higher of wheat shipped on non-American bottoms, and that the amount

of tonnage over would be made up by increasing the amount of grain shipments under what we called Public Law 480--

Mu: The regular Food for Peace--

Me: The regular Food for Peace thing. So on that basis after several very hectic sessions I got the logjam broken and got the people to go back to work.

Mu: Mr. Johnson did take a personal part in that?

Me: Oh, yes. He took a personal part because actually I would not have succeeded in getting the longshoremen to continue loading wheat if I was not able to bring to them the personal assurance of the President given to me that there would be no more waivers and that the amount of tonnage lost over the 50 percent would be made up subsequently in increased shipment of the Food for Peace in American bottoms. So I was in touch with President Johnson during those days almost on an hour-to-hour basis.

Mu: He had to overrule his own Commerce Department to get that assurance for you?

Me: Yes. Actually, his own Commerce Department had failed to live up to the agreement that President Kennedy had committed himself to. The odd part of this was that the American grain interests who had contracts with the Soviet Union to deliver this wheat on the piers in Russia tried to make it appear that the Soviet Union was responsible for this waiver and so on and so forth. This was not true. We found out when we finally got to the bottom of it that they weren't sticking to the 50-50 American grain operators was that they wanted to make some more money, and it was cheaper--

Mu: It was the American grain operators and not the Soviet?

Me: Not the Soviets, no. Because the Soviets had a fixed price and--

Mu: Didn't make any difference--

Me: Didn't make any difference how the wheat got to their ports, because they paid for it on the basis of it being delivered on the docks.

Mu: About that same time Mr. Johnson had his first real strike crisis. I think this didn't involve one of your unions. It was the railroad strike in 1964. Did you get involved with him on that?

Me: I got very much involved. They were our unions.

Mu: Are they--?

Me: All the railroad unions are in the AFL-CIO except one.

Mu: I knew that one wasn't, I guess--

Me: The Engineers are not.

Mu: But you were then the agent in that.

Me: I was very much in that fight. I testified before a Senate committee in which this thing was being handled. I was deep in the middle of that with President Johnson, too.

Mu: That's the first time that he used this technique of calling some of the principals together and sort of putting them in a room and saying, "Settle this." Did that procedure meet with your approval?

Me: It certainly didn't meet with my disapproval because after all when you have a deadlock, somebody has got to give, and in some cases both sides have got to give a little, and that's part of the collective bargaining process. I certainly had no objection to the President who was equally involved as President because of the importance of keeping the railroads going. I had no objection to him bringing them over to the White House and putting pressure on them, because that's actually what he was doing, and I think that's all legitimate.

Mu: You didn't feel like that was threatening real collective bargaining?

Me: Oh, no. I think that happens when real collective bargaining has failed. You see, after all, I'm very much in favor of collective bargaining, and I think it's one of the things that has enabled us to keep going. But I'd be the first to admit that there are cases where it does not come through.

Now, of course, you take these cases where collective bargaining fails, people who are opposed to collective bargaining immediately take the position, "Well, we've got to get rid of collective bargaining," just because it fails. Now, of course, for every case it fails, there are hundreds and hundreds where it does not fail, where agreement is reached. And of course the President has this responsibility and he has the powers under the law to call for emergency "cooling-off" periods, and he had to do that of course on a few occasions.

Mu: Did he consider strongly a compulsory arbitration--

Me: No, never.

Mu: Never did--

Me: No, never was interested. Of course, he wanted to settle these things, but at no time did he speak of compulsion--no thought.

Mu: It was speculated that he might have to ask for such a bill like that later, but you think it--?

Me: There was a lot of speculation. And he had to invoke the eighty-day injunction in some cases, but at no time did I ever see any indication that he would be for compulsive legislation of <u>any</u> kind.

Mu: What about when you take the parties in and sort of lock them up in the White House like that and say, "Make a settlement," does it turn out even-handed in fact? Does labor really get an even break?

Me: I think so, yes.

Mu: It doesn't work to labor's disadvantage?

Me: I don't think so, no, not in my experience.

Mu: Does the Labor Department play a role there?

Me: The Labor Department of course plays a role in all of these things. Then there's the Department of Mediation and Conciliation which is a separate department directly under the President. It's housed in the Labor Department. It's not under the Secretary of Labor. Of course they play a part. They put up with a lot of sleepless nights, you know, when you get into these negotiations. And I've got no objection to that. I certainly take the position that the Administration, the government, has an interest in these things, and it has got to try to play its part. However, I say under no circumstances should there be governmental compulsion because that's really the beginning of the end of our free way of life.

Mu: Did Mr. Johnson's Labor Department adequately represent the viewpoint of organized labor when it was called upon to do so?

Me: I'd say so, yes. I'd say that the Labor Department under President Johnson--we had no complaints there. I wouldn't say everything ran perfect; nothing does run perfect; but by-and-large our relations with the Labor Department during the entire Johnson years were very good.

Mu: What about his ideas he expressed, I think in one State of the Union message, that he wanted to merge the Labor Department with the Commerce Department? Had he asked you about that?

Me: Yes, and we told him quite frankly that we couldn't see it. We would never agree to it. I think the thing just died because of lack of support, but we were very, very much opposed to it. We felt that this was our department. It was set up fifty-odd years ago to take care of the problems of labor. It was set up in the interest of workers. And we felt that to blend it

into the Department of Commerce--it just wouldn't perform the same service that we expected of it when it was a separate department.

Mu: I wonder why he got that in his message to start with?

Me: I don't know. Well, from a purely bureaucratic administrative point of view, it's quite desirable because there's a lot of duplication of work, record-keeping, and research work in both departments. It could be a money-saver. But we just didn't agree with him on that. That caused no problem. We let him know right at the very start that we did not agree with him, and as I say we had no problem.

Now, another area we did not agree with him was this idea of so-called guidelines.

Mu: That was my next question. You're anticipating me.

Me: To govern collective bargaining. Now President Johnson was not responsible for the guidelines theory. That came from the Kennedy Administration. In fact it came from Arthur Goldberg who was Secretary of Labor in the Kennedy Administration. And the very minute that Goldberg suggested this, we promptly without hesitation said, "No, we don't buy guidelines; we don't go for guidelines." Now of course that was the official position of the Kennedy Administration. It was the official position of President Johnson. But at no time did we agree, at no time could we accept the idea. Here again, this was something that was talked about, but it just never happened. And here again he understood our opposition, and it didn't make the slightest difference to him in our relations at all.

Mu: You could still be friends even though you disagreed?

Me: Oh, yes. There was no question about it--no problem at all there. He knew where we stood. I can recall I was over to see him one day, I had made a

talk in New York a few days before and there was some mention in the press, and he said: "Well, I see you kicked my guidelines around the other day."

I just said, "Mr. President, they're your guidelines and not mine!" But anyway, that caused no problem at all.

Mu: But you kept the pressure on as far as your opposition to him was concerned?

Me: Oh yes.

Mu: You didn't give in just because--?

Me: No.

Mu: What about 14-B? Did he try as hard as you wanted him to abolish it?

Me: Yes, he did.

Mu: Some of the press speculated that maybe he wasn't as interested--

Me: He tried just as hard as he could, and he was quite helpful. We got that through in the House with two or three votes to spare--that's all we had. And at no time did we think we were going to have any problem in the Senate, because in the Senate we felt we had a good eight or nine or ten votes to spare there--which of course we did have as time went on. But we didn't have enough votes to break a filibuster, you see. Everett Dirksen mounted a filibuster, and that stopped us because the Democratic leader Mansfield would not try to break the filibuster. You see, the way you break the filibuster is by meeting around the clock, just keep on meeting, and Mansfield absolutely refused to do that. And of course the repeal of 14-B went down the drain because of that.

Mu: Did President Johnson try to influence Mansfield?

Me: No. As far as I know, no, I don't think that he did.

Mu: You didn't feel that Mr. Johnson failed to give you adequate support on it though?

Me: No, he gave us wonderful support on it. He was very, very helpful. And of course the people over on Capitol Hill knew where he stood on it. But actually it was a case that was decided by the actions of Dirksen and Mansfield. Dirksen decided to filibuster. We had the votes. We could have enacted Repeal 14-B by a vote of something like fifty-eight, perhaps, to forty-two. We had the votes. And Dirksen said that he would not let it come to a vote. He announced he would filibuster, and he did! He had some assistance--not too much, but he did have some assistance. And we couldn't break the filibuster. No member of the Senate can help break the filibuster under their rules unless the Majority Leader decides to meet around the clock. And he absolutely refused to meet around the clock. If he had met around the clock, we'd have broke the filibuster, because a number of senators who perhaps would not vote for us would vote to shut off debate because they feel that filibusters are unfair and so on and so forth. But anyway there was no question where President Johnson stood, and actually the 14-B repeal was lost because of Dirksen's action in mounting the filibuster and Mansfield's refusal to use the full powers of his position to break the filibuster. You see, Mansfield was with us--

Mu: He was for repeal.

Me: He was publicly committed to vote for repeal, but he would not lengthen the hours of the Senate. I think he let them go until 6 o'clock and that's as far as he would go.

Mu: That's not enough to break the filibuster.

Me: Yes.

Mu: What about other major strikes of the Johnson years, either the steel strike in '65, the copper business? Were you ever one of the principals that he

said to "Get into the room and settle this"?

Me: No. My position here is [that] I'm head of the AFL-CIO, which is a coordinating organization.

Mu: He used the individual union heads.

Me: The individual union heads involved. Now when they get into these troubles, we can help them but we can't tell them what to do. They've got full autonomy to work out these problems, so I was never in one of those pressure sessions.

Mu: Did he try to use you to reach the union heads?

Me: Oh yes. He would call me and ask me to talk to them, and I would. Of course while I could talk to them and try to influence, I had no power to order them. They were completely autonomous. Actually the AFL-CIO is a federation of unions rather than of individuals, and as such it's the property of the unions really. We're often referred to as the parent body, but that's not the proper designation. We're not a parent body. While we issue what are normally called charters, what they are, they really certificates of affiliation. And the AFL-CIO as an institution is the property of the affiliates.

Mu: Did Mr. Johnson try to make sure that he never did get involved in the internal politics of organized labor?

Me: No, not at all.

Mu: He was careful in that regard.

Me: He did all his business through the proper channels. In other words, if he had something of a general nature he would call me; and if he had something that affected one union, he would call the head of that union.

Mu: The Viet Nam war, for example, became quite an issue within labor apparently. Mr. Johnson didn't get involved in the internal debate there.

Me: No, it did not become a great issue in labor. Of course, there were two or three people that opposed our policy, but you'll find that in convention

after convention and in executive council meeting after executive council meeting the position and support of the Johnson Administration's conduct of the war, the purposes in being out there, was 100 percent endorsed. We had some vocal opposition at the local level, but at the top level we had no opposition at all.

Mu: So the press speculation on that was just exaggerated?

Me: Exaggerated. They'd always speculate that people were unhappy, but if people were unhappy with the situation, and there might have been some that were, it didn't surface, it didn't come to the top.

Mu: You didn't have a hard time trying to get support?

Me: Never. We passed resolutions setting forth our position in great detail at our conventions. In practically in all cases we passed them by unanimous vote.

Mu: That's an interesting thing to get on here because the press reported that the other way, I think, very widely.

Me: Not true.

Mu: You served on President Kennedy's--what do they call it, the Clay Committee on Foreign Aid?

Me: Yes.

Mu: And dissented from its report.

Me: Yes.

Mu: Did you ever talk to Mr. Johnson much about foreign aid as an issue or position?

Me: No. When the aid appropriations would come up, we'd support them, and of course he knew our position, and our position would be practically identical with his, you see.

Mu: I was going to ask if maybe his position was closer to yours than it was the Clay Committee's?

Me: That's right.

Mu: So you had no great disagreement there.

Me: No, not at all.

Mu: What about politics? Did Mr. Johnson hint to you or consult with you in any way before he decided to pull himself out in March of 1968?

Me: No. We were in touch with him just as often in those days. He spoke to our building trades group here in Washington I think either Thursday or Friday morning, and I thought he made a fighting political speech. But on the following Sunday night, about forty-eight hours later, he withdrew.

I didn't know he was going to withdraw until a short time before he went on the air. Marvin Watson called me at home on the President's instructions to let me know that he was going to withdraw. Just to let me know so I wouldn't be too shocked when it happened. That was maybe an hour and a half or two hours before he broadcast that night.

No, he made that decision on his own, and I think it was something that he just worked out in his own mind. He had this bad situation in the party where prominent members of his own party were publicly attacking him. I don't suppose it disturbed him much to have to fight the other party, the opposition party, but I think he was upset by the actions of Gene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy, who were publicly out fighting him on the war issue.

He inherited this war issue, you see. He didn't start it. It started long before he got into the White House. He certainly was not going to surrender, and that's what a good many of the so-called doves wanted us to do. They don't put it in those terms, but when you analyze what they're advocating, they're advocating that we withdraw unilaterally, get out and leave the thing go. Of course, Johnson would not do that any more than I think President Nixon will do it.

Mu: But the AFL-CIO, as far as you were concerned, was prepared to mobilize political support behind Mr. Johnson for another term?

Me: Actually, our position on this Viet Nam war from the very start was that we supported our government's efforts out there. They had made a commitment, and we supported their efforts to discharge their obligations under that commitment. Insofar as the method used and all this debate about whether we should bomb the North, Haiphong, and so on, we never took any position on those things.

Mu: Just general support.

Me: We just took a position [that] we supported the position of our government, and we supported the President who has the constitutional responsibility as Commander-in-Chief as to how he will fight this particular war. We took the position that we would support the President on that. But we did not attempt to pass judgment on the methods or anything else. We said, "one, our nation has made a commitment; two, we should discharge that commitment. And in discharging that commitment, it should follow the lead of the President." And that's practically all we said right from the start.

Mu: Did he play any part then in the subsequent campaign after he withdrew? Did he talk to you about what your position might be during the heat of the convention, the nomination, or the campaign thereafter?

Me: No. When he pulled himself out of the race, he did not attempt as far as I know to influence--of course it's possible he might have been playing a part behind the scenes, but as far as I'm concerned there was no indication of that at all.

Mu: He didn't pull the strings for AFL-CIO political activity?

Me: No, we made it quite clear a few days after he withdrew that we would support Hubert Humphrey. I don't think President Johnson would have any desire to

change that sort of a decision. I think he looked upon Humphrey as a logical successor to himself. No he did not, as far as I know, ever take any public position on that.

Mu: Some of Mr. Johnson's critics have said since he has been out of office particularly that while he passed a great number of measures that sounded liberal from the social services standpoint and so on, that in fact it was mostly rhetoric or talk and not too much action. Do you think that's a fair criticism?

Me: That is absolutely untrue.

Mu: You think there's real substance in his--

Me: I have here in this office--in a frame here--I have 100 pens that we used in the signing of 100 bills. May I bring them over?

Mu: Yes, I haven't seen that display. That's a remarkable thing. Let me stand up there and hold it for you. My gracious! 100 major bills--

Me: 100 major bills that were signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson! Anyone who says that his support of these liberal causes was just rhetoric of course does not know the truth, or is not impressed by the truth. Just reading at random: "Social Security Amendment, 1965."

Mu: That's the Medicare Act, isn't it?

Me: Medicare, yes. "Mental Retardation Facilities. Community Health Services." These are all '65. "Voting Rights Act of '65."

Mu: That's the civil rights.

Me: Civil rights field. "The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Vocational Education Act of 1963. Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. Federal Employees Compensation Act. Veterans Benefits. Vocational Rehabilitation Act of '65. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act of '66. Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of '66. Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of '66."

Mu: That's an important one.

Me: Comprehensive Health Planning and Public Health Service Amendment of 1966. Economic Opportunity Act of '64. Child Nutrition Act. These are just a few. Fair Labor Standards Act of '68. Food Stamp Amendment. Economic Opportunity Amendments of '66. Housing and Urban Development. Accessibility of Public Buildings for the Physically Handicapped. Minimum Wage. The Transportation Act. Clean Air Act. Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke Amendment of '65.

Mu: I see what you mean. As far as you're concerned, they were implemented then?

Me: They were implemented by legislation, and I would say as to the scope of the legislation, the quality and quantity of legislation, there is no parallel in the history of the United States--no parallel in the history of any other President. When you figure the amount of legislation--just take education, federal aid to education! Under the Eisenhower Administration, it was practically nil. I think it went up to a few billion--five or six billions--by the time President Kennedy was assassinated. In the two or three years after that, it had gone up to thirty billion dollars under President Johnson. Aid to students, making it possible--the population of our colleges has increased tremendously under President Johnson. There are more young people going to college. There are more opportunities to go to college. There's federal aid; there's federal loans.

Mu: I got one of those myself one time.

Me: The record of this man, I think, is the greatest record of liberal and progressive social legislation that has ever been written anywhere. Of course, the one big drawback was people got tired of the war in Viet Nam. And the demagogues used that. They attacked President Johnson I think very, very unfairly. But there's no question that the attacks were successful. It

reduced his possibility. People sort of forgot all these things that he had done, and also forgot that he isn't the one that brought us to Viet Nam. They labeled it Johnson's war, and of course this was effective propaganda. Although I still think that if he had decided to go on, I think he would have been reelected President.

Mu: You don't have any indication that he was in any political trouble?

Me: No.

Mu: In Wisconsin or places?

Me: No.

Mu: That's a pretty good summary of your opinion of him that you just gave. Are there any areas that we haven't talked about in which you dealt with him closely that you think would be important to mention here? Don't let me cut you off in any way.

Me: I think we've covered the field pretty well. As I say, he started out when he was thrust into this job at the time of the assassination, I think at that point all he was thinking of was what he could do for this country, what he could do for the people of this country. I think that's the only thing that motivated him from that minute on. I think that he made his mind up that he was going to write a record, that he wanted to be just the best President the United States ever had, and I think he tried awfully hard. I think he was successful to a greater degree than perhaps he's given credit at this time; however, I think when the history of this period is written a few years down the road that he will show up as one of the greatest Presidents the United States ever had!

Mu: Thank you for giving us this time this morning, Mr. Meany.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By George Meany

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, George Meany, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed George Meany

Date 4/24/72

Accepted Harry J. Middleton for
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Date 12/19/75