

INTERVIEW II

DATE: March 25, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: WILBUR MILLS

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Congressman Mills' office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: Let's start, Chairman Mills, with Medicare in 1965.

W: Well, Medicare had been before us, you know, long before that. Aime Forand had introduced the bill. He was not the ranking Democrat to me, but well up toward the top of the [Ways and Means] Committee. The only people for it were labor unions, and he was the only one on the committee, apparently, that was for it. And then Johnson had his remarkable election in 1964, and that was a campaign issue. I thought then the time had come to enact something, and he recommended that we take care of the hospital costs only of people over sixty-five under Social Security, in connection with Social Security.

And as we went into it and as it developed, we realized that that would take care of about 25 per cent of the total costs of the elderly, medical costs and things. So we knew that if we passed it--and I told him this--I said, "If we pass your program, Mr. President, and the American people find out we're taking care of 25 per cent of them, we're going to be the laughingstock of the country. We've misled them, they'll think. And it'll react seriously on us." "Well, do what you want to do about it, then, and develop it as you want to develop it."

So we proceeded then, with the help of the departmental folks, to develop the whole thing, to take care of the out-of-hospital costs as well under Plan B, you remember. And I astutely got a Republican to offer that motion in the committee, so I got all the Republican votes for it. John Byrnes was not the usual Republican; he was from Wisconsin, and they were always a little bit more liberal in their thinking on things like that.

So we adopted the Plan B, and the President always thought that that was a great addition to it. He was always thanking me for that.

G: Wilbur Cohen described that process as the greatest legislative maneuver that he'd ever witnessed.

M: (Laughter)

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- G: Now, tell me where the idea of combining these--there were actually about three different proposals, weren't there, Eldercare--in a multiple-tiered piece of legislation?
- M: Well, we had to put it somewhere, and I guess we came up with that idea; I don't remember the details of it. But I don't think it came from the department; I think it came from us on the committee. I don't remember just how, but I know that we had the three proposals. First of all, we had the Kerr-Mills thing in effect and had to replace that with Medicaid, and--I don't know; maybe I had the idea. I just don't remember. But it came from the committee, somewhere.
- G: But the supplemental aspect that Byrnes introduced was actually in concert with you?
- M: Oh, I developed the whole thing in the committee. I mean, we did, with the help of the staff people, by my questions and other questions of other members we developed the idea and the program. Then I whispered in his ear, "John, I wish you'd offer a motion to include it." "I'd be glad to." (Laughter) He did.
- G: Cohen describes this almost with an element of amazement. Was it pieced together--?
- M: No, it was planned.
- G: It was? You'd been working on it for some time.
- M: We planned that, yes. Oh, yes. I'd developed some ideas on it, how we'd proceed to--I was always determined that whatever came out of the committee passed, you know. It was a waste of time to spend a month or two in the committee developing something that you couldn't pass, and I was always trying to get something I knew would appeal to a cross section of the membership. I got that idea from Sam Rayburn, of course.
- G: Historians are always, I guess, going to wonder about your own process of supporting the bill from I guess the time it was first introduced in 1961--
- M: No, I wasn't for it then. I didn't think we could pass it.
- G: Let me ask you to describe what transformation, if any, in your own mind there was, and all of the elements: to what extent was it the ability to pass it? To what extent was it coming around to a different point of view on--?
- M: Well, time had developed, I think, more support for it among the people. But then the election of the President in 1964 had the major impact, made the major difference. He had espoused it in his campaign, you know, and here he was elected by a 2 to 1 vote,

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which was a pretty strong endorsement of it, I thought. I thought the time had come to pass it. I don't think we could have passed it in 1961. I told Kennedy that, and he agreed, I guess. He never did really press me about it.

G: Did LBJ press you before 1965?

M: Oh, no. No, not on that, he didn't. Actually, he talked to me I guess before he submitted it. He usually did, and I'm sure he did in that instance. But there was never any pressure on it. I was for it by then, in 1965.

G: Was there anyone whose advice you may have sought during this period that may have also been instrumental in underscoring the popularity of it?

M: No, no, I could feel it, I think. I don't remember--the people that I talked to were doctors who were opposed to it, primarily, and we finally got some of them over to our point of view. And now, of course, they're living off of it.

G: Let me ask you to describe the AMA's [American Medical Association] efforts to defeat the measure over the years, and to what extent they did put pressure on you.

M: Well, they put tremendous--or tried to put; I never did realize pressure was being put on me, I guess, but I knew the head of the AMA at the time. Was it Roth, Dr. Roth? What was his name, Dr. [James] Roth? I knew him quite well, and he visited me quite often about it, but I had pressure from my doctors down home, even, about it. And they didn't understand it; they were just reflecting what they were told to tell me. And I could always get around that by explaining a little bit about the problem and what I thought we ought to do. I said, "You ought to be for it. You're in the business of saving lives," and so on.

(Laughter)

They'd back off; they never really put too much pressure on me. I'm sure they thought they did, but I didn't think so.

G: They never tried to, say, organize an opponent in your district or anything like that?

M: Oh, no. No, they never did that.

G: There seems to have been some sort of alliance between the medical community and the tobacco community on this.

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M: There must have been. I never was quite able to prove it, but I'd heard that at the time. I did have a doctor run against me in 1966.

G: Did you?

M: Yes. He was a psychiatrist, young fellow. It didn't amount to anything, but he never raised the issue, never raised the issue. And he was put up by the Governor's son and some crooks there in the state, really, political crooks who got him into the race. The doctors didn't do it. No, the doctors were always with me, politically.

G: Now, on the Senate side, Russell Long and George Smathers seem to have changed in their support for the bill.

M: Yes, very definitely. I think they were affected, too, by the election.

G: Do you?

M: I do. I think we all realized that the time had come for it.

G: Your committee actually had a different composition as a result of 1964, too, didn't it?

M: We did; we had a two-to-one majority. The House went two to one, so the committee was set up two to one. Had fewer Republicans and more Democrats; the only time we had a change.

G: How significant do you think was the political advantage that the Democratic Party gained from the Medicare legislation when it did pass?

M: Temporarily I think it was a tremendous gain, but I think it's tapered off.

G: Is that right?

M: Yes, sort of like the blacks and the Republican Party. They were freed by the Republican Party, but they've forgotten it now.

G: What were the defects of the bill at the time it was passed?

M: We were underestimating. Let me give you an example of what I mean, on Medicaid. We were told by Bob [Meyers], the actuary, that the cost of Medicaid over Kerr-Mills in the first year would be \$250 million, nationwide. It was \$250 million in New York State alone.

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What had happened, there was a misunderstanding, I think--Rockefeller and I talked about it--on his part as to what we meant by certain standards that we wrote in for the states to follow. They had 41 per cent of the people in the state of New York eligible for Medicaid, the legislature did, after we passed it. And of course, they'd upped the numbers and that upped the cost over and above what Bob Meyers ever anticipated.

We started off with a 7/10 of 1 per cent rate to finance Medicare, and actually it was 9/10 that we needed desperately. The President talked me into the 7/10 because Gardner Ackley, he said, had told him that if we went to 9/10 of 1 per cent we'd have a depression. Seven-tenths of 1 per cent wouldn't cause a depression; 2/10 of a per cent--I said, "Mr. President, that's ridiculous." He said, "Well, I just don't want a depression. You know I don't, and you don't either. Can't you start it at 7/10?" So we started it at 7/10, and we should have started it at 9/10. But we corrected that later on, before I ever left.

G: Should there have been something built in to control things like doctors' fees?

M: We didn't think so at the time. We didn't think so; we never foresaw what did happen: hospital costs going up. What happened, every hospital had to have this expensive equipment--maybe they'd use it one day out of a week--in place of all the hospitals in a community going together and having it in one hospital; that would reduce the importance of the other hospitals, they thought. So they all had to put that in. And then the minimum wage came into effect, which upped the costs of hospitalization tremendously all of a sudden, the year after, I think, we passed Medicare and Medicaid. All of those things together had a lot to do with it, as well as the increase in inflation and things of that sort that went along. No, we never foresaw that the costs would go like they did, doctors' fees would go up like they have. And we didn't foresee all these damage suits against doctors, you know, that caused them to have to pay such exorbitant premiums, that necessitated the increase in the visit charges. A lot of things like that we just didn't foresee; nobody did. The actuaries didn't foresee it and none of the rest of them.

G: The actuarial soundness of the Social Security Act itself seems to have been a major consideration of yours throughout this period.

M: Well, we never had any trouble with it. What happened, what got us off, was that COLA [Cost of Living Adjustment] deal. It was never properly financed. I argued against it on the floor of the House, but I got thirty-six votes against John Byrnes' motion to include it in the bill. The trouble was--I didn't realize it at the time; neither did he, but the indexing of the benefits of all government programs was in the Republican and Democratic primaries of 1972, and I didn't even know it. Everybody

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felt like they wanted to be for it before an election, you know, and he attached it to a 20 per cent increase in benefits, 20 per cent across-the-board increase that the committee had reported. He did it to needle me; he was mad at me or provoked at me about something, I don't know what, at the time, but he never expected it to carry.

(Laughter)

I pled with him; I told him they'd never have the privilege of raising Social Security benefits in the future, and they never have, of course. I thought that would stop them, because they got a big political boost out of that every time they did it. And every time we increased the benefits, we always upped the tax. But it was the cost, and then you had this inflation under Carter that nobody dreamed we'd ever have, I guess, and certainly the program was not financed to take care of ordinary inflation, let alone that. So it was the COLA increase that I think got the fund in trouble. I've been told that by people who were there at the time and studied it.

G: What about simply the increase in life expectancy?

M: That has had something to do with it. We took that into consideration, though; we knew about that. Maybe we didn't estimate it as long as people live today, but we did take into consideration an increase in life expectancy.

G: You undoubtedly talked to LBJ about Medicare during this period.

M: Oh, my goodness.

G: What was his philosophy on this piece of legislation?

M: You mean in the beginning, before 1964?

G: Yes.

M: He wanted to do everything that Kennedy had espoused in 1960. I don't know why, because Bobby Kennedy and certain members of the family looked down on him; he was beneath them, you know. But he had this tremendous loyalty to John Kennedy. Unbelievable. He had to enact everything that he had espoused, because he had succeeded him. He had to do it. And with me, that was what he was saying all the time about it. "I've got to do it because John Kennedy espoused it." Just that simple. Oh, he'd give you some additional arguments, but he never really put pressure on me about that. The pressure he put on me always was about that 10 per cent surcharge.

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G: He would sometimes, I'm told, personalize issues, and talk about somebody's grandmother or somebody's mother.

M: Oh, God, he'd tell me about some senator or something that would cross him, "I know enough on him to send him to the penitentiary." He'd say that to me sometimes about some senator, while he was president, who had crossed him. And then, too, he called me one time. He wanted me to talk to a member of the Senate that I had gotten him to put on the Finance Committee, Gene McCarthy, after he'd left the House. I'd gotten Gene on the Ways and Means Committee, and we were very close friends, and he wanted me to call Gene McCarthy and get him straightened out. "Your man, now. Your man. Call your man on the Senate Finance Committee." (Laughter) He always referred to him as my man. He never forgot anything like that, never forgot it. He never forgot it.

G: What sort of lobbying did the White House do on Medicare?

M: At the time, O'Brien was very helpful, but it didn't take any, really. It didn't take any on our committee; now, it may have in the House as a whole, but I had counted the vote pretty well and knew I had enough votes to pass it, more than enough. Maybe the Senate, they had to work over there on it. Probably did. But he was good; he was a very good lobbyist, one of the best the White House ever had.

G: Let me ask you to go into the conference committee deliberations on the bill.

M: I didn't have too much trouble in conference, as I remember. They had amended our bill over there on the Senate side, as I recall, in some respects, but I don't remember too much about it. There's nothing stands out in my mind, in other words, as a difficulty in conference. I don't have any recollection of any real difficulties. Now, maybe the record would show it. If you'd give me some idea of what you've found that I could comment on, I might recall it. Just as compulsory health insurance, you see, and it wasn't, of course. It wasn't at all like the British system. We could refute that argument easily.

I remember the Eldercare. Syd [A. Sydney] Herlong was one of my problems on the Democratic side.

John never did offer his program, as I remember, in the Ways and Means Committee, did he? He never did offer the bill he'd introduced for the Republicans.

G: I don't know.

M: I don't think he ever did.

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- G: They ended up ultimately voting against the measure.
- M: Oh, they voted for us, didn't they? Didn't they vote for Medicare? I know John Byrnes did, coming out of the committee.
- G: Well, but on the floor didn't the Republicans all vote against it, ultimately?
- M: I don't know; they may have.
- G: I'll check that.
- M: I wish you would. I've just forgotten. But we had had hearings on it before, [that] was the reason we went right into it.
- G: The Senate version of the bill provided for longer hospitalization and post-hospital home care.
- M: Yes. Actually, it was almost unlimited, wasn't it, the hospitalization in the Senate bill? Yes. That was very costly.
- G: How was this difference resolved?
- M: I don't remember how we resolved it. They backed off; the Senate finally backed off. I guess we just were adamant about it. Sometimes if they see you're adamant they back off.
- G: Let me ask you to just--
- M: My memory's not good on it.
- G: --in general to describe the kinds of give-and-take that you have when you've got a conference committee. You've got a lot of strong men from each side.
- M: Well, actually it's not just that. They're all strong men; they're intelligent and all. But the senators generally will almost stand fast on anything if a friend of theirs in the Senate, or they themselves, want it, if they want it badly. They'll tell you ahead of time. My relationship was very good with Bob Kerr always, and Bob and I would meet. He was not the chairman of the committee, but he was acting chairman. [Harry] Byrd was in his dotage and almost let Bob Kerr run it. But we'd meet before the conference ever began. He'd tell me what the senators were going to insist upon, and I'd tell him what we had to have and what we wouldn't take. And normally we'd have the thing worked out before we ever went into conference. I'll never forget, the

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first time Russell Long was on a conference, this happened. And he started fuming. "I'm for com-bines only when I'm a part of a com-bine, and I haven't been a part of this! What have you fellows agreed to?" "To maintain 27 1/2 per cent for oil." "Oh, that's fine; that's fine."

(Laughter)

He stopped right quick when we told him that. That wasn't part of our agreement, but we told him that.

G: That's a great story.

M: But he and I could get along wonderfully well, better than some of the others.

G: Did the fact that you did have a consensus in your committee strengthen your position in conference?

M: Oh, always, always. I never bypassed anybody. I don't do what they do now: pick people that you know are going to be on your side. I always took them in order of their seniority. Never once did I ever deviate from that. Bob Doughton used to deviate from it; he'd get permission, back in 1943, when I went on my first conference. I was way down at the tail end of the committee, almost. But he had Democrats stand aside so he could put me on; he wanted to train me, he said. (Laughter) But, hell, he knew what I was going to do, and all that. But I never did that. I always took them right in order of their seniority on the committee. Never had any trouble with the members. I never had any member on my side that ever revolted, or anything like that really, against me. Syd Herlong introduced this bill, but Syd Herlong was one of my staunchest supporters.

G: Of course, after Bob Kerr died, I guess Russell Long became--

M: Well, Russell and I were very close, always very close.

G: How did he differ from, say, Bob Kerr, in his approach to the conference?

M: I don't know that there was a lot of difference in them.

G: Really?

M: No, no. In conference there wasn't any; they both of them could tell a good joke if things got too hot. Russell would tell something about his uncle or somebody in his family, and everybody'd laugh and forget about their differences. And Bob Kerr was

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always great at that, too. But they'd stand up for some senator who wanted something. Now they'd stand forever.

G: Let's assume that there was a fundamental difference between the House and the Senate on a particular measure, not necessarily Medicare, but something. For example, the Senate, in order to get some support for their version, would they bring in any quid pro quo on another piece of legislation, or--?

M: No, they would try to pick out something they knew we wanted, that they were--

G: In the same bill.

M: --yes, in the same bill, that they were agreeable to even, and raise a question about it to scare you and make you think they weren't going to take your provision. They'd do that. But it was easily detectable, so it didn't go anywhere with us.

The Senate was always great to put in something for some individual, and very seldom would we take a thing like that, especially in tax bills that would come up. We always considered that they were great loophole builders, you know. Tell them to their face, some ~ times.

G: Russell Long especially, I guess, achieved at least a reputation for building--

M: I think that reputation is exaggerated, frankly.

G: Do you?

M: I do, yes. Russell is more of what we used to call in the South--what were they? Oh, goodness. I've forgotten the word. But socially they were for little people, always.

G: Populists?

M: Populists is what I'm trying to think of, yes. He was more of a Populist, I think. However, he took care of the oil industry; don't think he didn't. His state's livelihood depended on it, and so he did the proper thing in doing that. But he was always for the little folks, too. Russell was a great member of the Senate, very intelligent. He knew the rules in the Senate better than anybody, almost. But Russell had an unfortunate situation: he'd get mad [and] he'd start to stutter. He'd had that affliction all his life; he was perfectly all right when he was normal, but he'd get mad [and] he'd start to stutter. You could always tell when he'd get mad.

(Laughter)

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G: That might be a useful--

M: It was a very useful thing for us to have.

But Senator [John] Williams of Delaware and Bob Kerr, one time, I thought were going to have a fight in a conference. They got so mad at one another; Bob Kerr said words to him that I didn't think anybody would take without fighting.

G: What did he say?

M: I've forgotten what it was, but he was cussing him and all, and calling him everything. But Williams took it.

G: Kerr was a very intimidating guy.

M: Oh, he'd dominate you. Yes.

G: How did you deal with someone like that in your own--?

M: I never had a bit of trouble with him. I visited with him out on his ranch and places like that. Doug Dillon and I went out there, and different people, and I was always very close to him. He was always going to be my finance manager when I had a campaign, but I never had one, so he never served in that capacity. You know, when he died they found \$700,000 in his safe in his office. He gave money to every senator every time they had a campaign, Democrat or Republican; it didn't make any difference. It was \$10,000, at least. He was very free with his money.

G: There was also a Senate amendment that liberalized the disability requirements that was accepted, but they had a provision lowering the retirement age that was not.

M: Yes, I know we kicked that out, yes.

G: Any recollections of how?

M: I don't have any recollection of the liberalization of the disability. What was it, do you remember?

G: Theirs was, I think, sixty, and--

M: For disability?

G: Yes.

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M: Yes, I remember that. Yes, we took that. Actually it was just an oversight on our part. We'd have had it in there, I think, if we'd have thought about it.

G: Did LBJ ever talk to you in retrospect about the significance of this legislation, or how he viewed it?

M: You mean later on?

G: Yes.

M: No, the only time I ever met with him at the Ranch, all he wanted to know was my opinion of how history was going to treat him. I don't know why, but he had that on his mind.

G: What did you tell him?

M: I told him I had no idea, but I would guess very favorably.

G: He never reflected on the significance of Medicare, though?

M: No, I don't think he ever did to me, don't remember it. I know we had a big celebration out in Independence, Missouri, when he signed it, and I was talking to Mike Mansfield and somebody else way back in the back, on the stage there, and I didn't hear him call my name. But he wanted to give me the second pen that he'd used to sign the bill. He gave Harry Truman the first one. And I didn't hear him, and Truman reached around and got hold of me and said, "The President's calling you!"

(Laughter)

So I finally went up to get it. But George Meany was there and I don't know who all. We went out in a special train or special cars--I've forgotten--on a train out to Independence.

G: Is it true that there were a lot of congressmen on both sides that simply didn't want to vote on the measure in 1964 before the campaign?

M: I think there were a lot of them that felt that way, yes.

G: --and wanted you to sort of hold back?

M: See, I had hearings on it in 1964. That's why we didn't have any in 1965, when we went right into writing it. There wasn't any need to have any additional hearings. I

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got criticized a little bit because we didn't have further hearings, but I didn't see the necessity for that.

G: Well, there'd been hundreds of witnesses.

M: Oh, my gosh. We'd heard it for weeks and weeks, you know. No, many members said something to me. "Let's don't vote on it now, before the election." I think they were waiting to really find out just what the feeling of the people was. And Johnson had pinpointed it as his number-one campaign issue, and won by a two-to-one vote. That was enough.

There was still a feeling on the part of members in 1964 that it wasn't as popular as some people thought it was. And it wasn't labor that did it; I think it was just a realization of need on the part of people.

G: Anything else with regard to Medicare that you haven't talked about?

M: No, I don't know of anything else. I know we had the twentieth anniversary of it in 1985, and Wilbur [Cohen] and I prepared an article for some publication the department put out over here. You've read that, I guess.

G: Yes.

M: I haven't seen Wilbur Cohen in some days. Is his health still good?

G: He's in good shape.

M: That's good. Wilbur was, I guess, one of the first fellows on Social Security, with [Arthur] Altmeyer, you remember. They had a program of some sort in Wisconsin, and Altmeyer was from Wisconsin and had something to do with the establishment of that state program, something like Social Security. I don't know what it was, but I know he played a very important part in the creation of it, to begin with. Wilbur Cohen was one of his assistants at the time.

I'll never forget, Wilbur and I had been talking, and he was secretary of HEW, and the question came up about when would the budget for HEW exceed the Department of Defense. I asked him that question before the members of the committee. He said, "In fiscal 1975, if not sooner." This was about 1973 fiscal year. (Laughter) Because of Social Security being in it, you know. And the members were shocked; they just couldn't think about it being so great.

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G: Let me go into some other issues now. You've been quoted, or at least referred to, in some articles as saying that you never wanted to take a measure onto the floor that you were not going to be able to carry.

M: I never would. I always checked the House first.

G: And in one early instance, I guess the annual bill to raise the debt ceiling was defeated.

M: Oh, yes. I told Joe [Henry] Fowler I couldn't pass it, and he said, "Well, won't you try? Take it out there; I think I can get you the votes." I said, "Joe, no way you can do it." It got beat by a few votes, you remember. What was it, \$365 billion, I was asking for. I knew I was going to get beat on that one; it was the only one I got beat on. Came back a week later, \$357 [billion] permanent, \$8 billion temporary, passed it easily, just the difference in 357 and 365.

G: Let me ask you how the White House's legislative liaison program changed over the years from, say, the late fifties and early sixties, when Eisenhower was president up through the Johnson presidency. Did you notice a difference in administration lobbying--?

M: Well, it depended. I never did think the Republican lobbyists were quite as effective. [Richard] Timmons, wasn't he Eisenhower's chief lobbyist, Timmons, who's downtown now? I think he was; I think he was with Eisenhower--or Nixon. I guess it was Eisenhower.

G: Yes.

M: He was a good man, there's no question about it. He came from Tennessee, I think, originally. But I never noticed, I just never followed the Republican lobbyists, just never paid enough attention to them. But Larry O'Brien was my pick of all the Democrats.

G: Did their methods become more sophisticated as they worked at it?

M: I don't know that they did; I don't know. They never were lobbying me; they were lobbying other members, you know, and I'd send them to members, and all, but I never had a real relationship with them that I would be in a position to evaluate, too much, their methods and all.

G: Do you think that if John Kennedy had lived that he would have been able to pass--?

M: No, wouldn't have gotten half of it through.

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G: Really?

M: No. No, and that's where Johnson doesn't get the credit. He had the greatest ability of any president to get things done.

G: Tell me how that ability was manifest, and how it would--

M: Well, some people would have said he was ruthless at his procedures to get it done. I didn't say that, but I've heard people say it. Let me give you an example of what he did to me one time, when he wanted his 10 per cent surcharge. He invited me to come by to visit with him on it, and I didn't know that he had invited every Democratic chairman of the House. They were sitting around the table in the Cabinet Room when I walked in. And of course he had a seat there right next to him for me.

He started with George Mahon of Texas. "George, you are with me on my tax proposal?" "Oh, yes, Mr. President." Bob Poage: "Yes, Mr. President." Went around to all the other chairmen: "Yes, Mr. President." He said, "Now, you see, you're the only one that's not with me. Wilbur, why don't you straighten up?" I got up and walked out.

G: Did you really?

M: I sure did. (Laughter)

G: Did he call you later?

M: Oh yes, yes. He knew I knew what he was doing to me. That was a real strong-arm approach, to have all your colleagues sitting there and you--I said, "I'm not against your 10 per cent surcharge, Mr. President, you know that. I want you to cut back on spending!" And at that time, the President could withhold money, you know. This was before they changed the law, which was a mistake. That was done because of Nixon withholding some money--

G: Impoundment.

M: Impounded some money that they wanted for rivers and harbors, I think it was.

G: Did LBJ use, say, projects in your district or anything--

M: No, no. No, no.

G: --as carrots?

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M: No, and neither did Kennedy. Kennedy gave me a lot of those missile sites. I asked him for them. He said, "Why do you want those?" "I want the labor." It cost about \$53 million dollars for every one of those holes to be dug, you know. I think it was something like that. A lot of labor involved, and my people always appreciated it, and I never had any reaction to a bomb being there. (Laughter) Put them all over my state, you know, most of them in my district. I just asked him for it.

G: But LBJ never used any of that--?

M: No, no, he never used that on me, no.

G: What were his other methods of persuasion? You've described one mass meeting he called.

M: Well, he knew his subjects, always. He knew that; he was well informed. He knew the legislative procedure. He knew how to do things out there. He'd been in the House and Senate both; been the leader in the Senate, and the most effective leader I think the Senate ever had, at least in my years. In the House, he was not as prominent as he later became in the Senate. He was a little reticent about being out in front.

G: Why do you think that was the case?

M: I don't know. I don't know, but he had that Naval Affairs Committee completely under his control, chairman and all. Carl Vinson wouldn't do anything without him.

G: Really?

M: Yes, when I got there, almost. He came there a year ahead of me, in the House. But he was something.

G: But he didn't like to take a strong policy position.

M: I didn't think so. Maybe just because he hadn't been there long, like I hadn't. But for some reason, I didn't see him take positions like he did in the Senate later on.

G: I believe you and your wife had dinner with him soon after the assassination.

M: We did, the second day [after] he was sworn in.

G: Let me ask you to describe that evening.

M: It was very pleasant. I always thought so much of Lady Bird.

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G: Was it out at The Elms?

M: No, no; we ate right upstairs there in the dining room.

G: It was in the White House?

M: In the private dining room, yes. I didn't know you knew that. I didn't know it was out, that anybody knew about it.

But my wife thought that Lyndon's table manners were not too good. She's always fussing at mine; she said, "He's as bad as you are."

(Laughter)

But we got by, anyway. It was a very pleasant evening; there was no business, he just wanted me there.

G: What was on his mind?

M: Nothing, apparently, just a friendly--we didn't discuss anything except there in front of our wives. They were very close at that time; they were very friendly. I had a daughter that was very close to Mrs. [Lynda Johnson] Robb, and they were friendly and all. But I often wondered why he had me there.

G: Did he talk about the mood of the country at all, or the--?

M: I don't remember too much about any details, except that it was a very friendly meeting, I know that, and he was talking to me about what he had to do and all, and that he wanted to carry out Kennedy's program and all that. But I don't remember too much about the details of it, frankly. I was surprised when he asked me to come up for dinner, frankly, that quick after he'd been sworn in.

G: How much do you think he understood about economic issues and fiscal policy?

M: I've wondered sometimes whether or not he did have a real good understanding of it. Very few presidents have; very few of them have had. I don't think he really knew as much, frankly, as a president ought to know about the relationship between economics and government, in other words, the decisions of government, the effects they may have. I found that lacking in every one of them.

G: Did you?

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M: Every one of them. Except I didn't have any conversations with Roosevelt that would have caused me to have had any knowledge of his economic feeling and all. But Kennedy, I thought Kennedy had a better understanding of it than Johnson, frankly, and why I don't know. But you know, he wanted to get the country moving; he knew that something had to be done, and whoever gave him the idea for the investment tax credit was just what the country needed. And then Johnson asked us to repeal it one time. We did. I told him, "I'm going to do it for you, but you're going to be back in six months asking us to restore it." It was in five and a half months.

Then Nixon asked for it to be repealed, you remember. I told him the same thing. Sure enough, we had to restore it.

G: And oddly enough, business was opposed to it at first.

M: At first they were, yes.

G: Let me ask you to describe that. Is it because, do you think, maybe they didn't understand it?

M: They didn't understand it, no. They didn't understand it. My goodness alive, I'd ask them when they'd come to talk to me about it, "Why in the hell are you--you get 10 per cent on top of your depreciation and all that. Why are you against it?" (Laughter)

G: What would they say?

M: Oh, well, they didn't understand that, they didn't understand. The ones I talked to didn't.

G: The fact that these presidents really didn't have the kind of knowledge necessary to make decisions, I guess made it even more essential for them to have good advisers.

M: That's the one thing that caused me to always feel that way about Johnson, was this difference between a 9/10 of 1 per cent and a 7/10 of 1 per cent tax on Medicare to start with. Two-tenths of 1 per cent couldn't have possibly caused any depression, and here he fell for Gardner Ackley's statement. I never had too much respect for his ability, frankly. A good man, but I thought Ackley was always overrated, and he was the President's primary economic adviser.

Today the great weakness I think in the Congress is that they don't look ahead to see what the likely consequences of the action will be in the field of taxes, for instance. It's all right to get money, but in the process of developing revenues, you've got to find out what the consequences are going to be upon the economy. Maybe there's another way you can go to get the money, where the consequences are good,

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whereas the way you're going would be bad. You have to look to the consequences of your act. And there's not enough of that done, I don't think. We didn't do enough of it when I was there.

G: Should there be some institutional changes to--?

M: I don't know what institutional change would--it's a matter of judgment and knowledge. People have to be informed, and there are not enough members, really, that are informed on economics.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

G: Let me ask you to assess the impact of the Vietnam War on the Great Society, the domestic programs.

M: Well, let me go back. Dean Acheson begged Johnson not to escalate that, that we had no interest. Now, the President didn't tell me this; neither did Dean. I've heard it from sources that I think are very reliable; I believe it's true.

G: Basically, you were saying we have no interests in that affair?

M: Well, there was no danger to us from that area, and we had no interest, really. And France had been there for years trying to win and couldn't win. But Johnson is not to be blamed for it. Actually, Eisenhower is the one that started it. We didn't sign the agreement, but Eisenhower said we would act under the terms of the agreement as though we were a party to it, that is, the separation of the two countries, you remember, the arrangement they'd worked out at Geneva. And then Kennedy sent some observers over there, first. It wasn't long, you had to send somebody to defend your observers.

An interesting thing: I was with Johnson one Saturday; I was sitting there at his desk when he ordered, on the telephone, a battalion from Fort Bragg, a parachute battalion. I had a cousin's son who was down there, a graduate of West Point, a brand-new lieutenant in the army. He had come up for the weekend to date some girl up here that he knew, and he was waiting in the office. When I got back to the office I said, "You better call your commanding general and find out if he wants you back in camp." I never told him why. And he did, and sure enough, they wanted him back. They left on Monday; this was on a Friday, I think it was, Friday afternoon. And they left on Monday to go over. He spent eighteen months over there, twice. He was there eighteen months, and then re-enlisted for eighteen months. And he never lost a man on his night patrols or anything; he had a remarkable record. But, anyway, I was there when Johnson did it.

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Johnson finally quit calling on me to come over to talk to him, for a while, about--Dick Russell and I were over there quite a lot, talking to him about the Vietnam War. I never went publicly against him. I kept cautioning him that the American people would not support an effort except to win. A holding effort they'll not support. "Then what do I do?" I said, "You bomb the hell out of North Korea [Vietnam?]. You bomb the ports, the harbors, mine them, put your mines down there where ships are blown up if they come in. Do all these things." He said, "Well, then they'd say I was a barbarian; I was killing women and children." I said, "Well, women and children are enemies too, Mr. President. When you fight a war, everybody in the country is the enemy." And he wasn't going to go for it. And we never could get him to see the danger of what he was pursuing, just that holding action, not winning but just holding. The American people don't support that kind of a war; they just won't do it. And Dick and I knew that, but he wouldn't listen and finally just quit having us down there.

G: Was Russell's advice basically along the same lines?

M: The same line, yes. That's my recollection of it.

G: Was he also afraid, do you think, that the war might even be escalated, that China might--?

M: He would say that, yes. But the main thing [was] that he didn't want the world to think of him when he was gone as being a barbarian, murdering women and children. You do that if you bomb a country, you know.

And I could understand that, but I could also understand the reluctance and the impatience of the American people to win, reluctance to not win.

G: But what did the war do to his domestic programs?

M: It hurt him. It hurt him, and it hurt Humphrey then, of course, when he ran to succeed him. And I think Johnson without the effects of the war would have definitely run again. He loved being president of the United States, don't think he didn't. And I think he realized the difficulty of being re-elected, and [that's] the reason why he backed off. But it was something that was just unbelievable in its effect on him, I think, in his memory, really. I think it did an awful lot of damage to him, certainly to his programs.

G: Could you yourself see some hard choices having to be made on, say, education and--?

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M: Oh, sure. There's thirty billion dollars a year; today it doesn't seem like a lot, but then it was an awful lot to be spending on that war a year, you know. That could have gone into a lot of different domestic programs, people thought. Yes, I heard that.

G: What do you think it affected the most?

M: I don't know that I can say any one thing. It had its least effect, of course, on the Department of Defense, but whether it affected education most, I don't know. I just don't know. I think it affected all of them. It certainly prevented growth, where growth really was necessary at the time, in any program.

G: To what extent do you think the war was responsible for the inflation that [inaudible]?

M: Well, when he left office you had 3.9 per cent unemployment and basically no inflation at all. It was there, but it just hadn't appeared, just hadn't developed. I think it had a lot to do with it.

G: Do you?

M: I do. I kept warning Nixon about it in the early days of his [inaudible], that that wasn't--no.

G: Did Nixon's policies exacerbate the inflation, or--?

M: Oh, no doubt about it. No doubt about it.

G: --was it simply a continuation?

M: Not following the right policies did it; no doubt about it. No doubt about it. I wanted him to cut back on spending, seven and a half billion dollars. I showed him where he could save it. He wouldn't do it. I mean, I asked him to do that in his first budget. He wouldn't do it.

G: Do you feel that you as a committee chairman had a reasonably accurate picture of what the spending levels for Vietnam were, or did you--?

M: No, I didn't. I had only the report from the Department of Defense, and the Bureau of the Budget telling me. I didn't have any details that I could say were my own. I used their figures, and of course they can make their figures look like whatever they want them to look like. I'm sure it cost more than that.

G: Yes. Others have described things like a letter of intent that--

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M: Oh, sure.

G: --might not show up in the budget but actually would generate expenditures.

M: It would show up--absolutely, absolutely. You always look at the amount in the pipeline, appropriated but unspent. Tremendous in the budget now.

G: But did you have ways of factoring in these amounts?

M: I always did that, in my own thinking, yes. What's in the pipeline, unspent. [Once] it's there, the Congress lost control of it, you see. Only the President in those days could stop it. And then we deprived him of the privilege, so nobody could stop it. I don't know what it is now; I haven't seen any budgets in the last four or five years, or budget messages. But it must be at least two trillion dollars in the pipeline.

We got into that in World War II, when we had to make appropriations for four or five years at a time, and make the money available for a contract that would be terminated five years from now, building a ship or something like that, you know. Prior to that we did it on an annual basis. The unspent money reverted if they couldn't spend it all by June, before the end of the fiscal year. (Laughter) That was another reason why we did it. But we started this business of that pipeline, and in the beginning it was small. It just kept growing; every year it got bigger and it got bigger. Nobody seemed to pay any attention to it. I couldn't get the Appropriations Committee to pay any attention to it. I kept telling them, "Here, this is a factor that you've got to take into consideration. They may be able to spend it quicker than they think they can, so it's going to affect your budget this year, maybe, when they don't think it will." You never know when they can complete a contract; you never know when they can start one, or begin the process of using the money. But it's a sight, the way it's run now.

G: Let me ask you to talk a little bit about the 1964 tax cut, or 1963 tax cut, I guess, as far as the House was concerned.

M: You mean the one we did for--we started it in 1962; that was the investment tax credit. We closed--what was it?--about twenty-five loopholes, or something like that, in connection with it? Primarily it was an investment tax credit, but there were a lot of other things in it.

Actually, I had a lot [to do with it] in the beginning, in the development of it with the administration downtown. The President, I'll never forget, was quite amazed. He sent [Alfred] Hayes, who was then president of the Federal Reserve in New York, to Europe to find out what the effect on thinking over there would be if we had an

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interest rate reduction. You remember him urging that as a part of the moving forward program? And they said, "Well, if you just reduce rates, we think you're just doing nothing but building up a further deficit. So we'd look upon it with disfavor." I said, "Well, send him back over there and find out what they'd think about a tax reform that involved a rate reduction." He sent him back. When he got the report he came to me and he said, "How did you know that? They're just all for that; they want us to reform our taxes, even though we lose money." So we put a lot of reform into it, to lose the money. (Laughter) But Hayes is the one that brought the message back. I'll never forget it.

My relationship was very close with Kennedy. I was down there every day, just about.

G: How did you determine the relationship here between--?

M: I knew; I had talked to some people over there. They had told me as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee that I ought to begin to reform the tax law, that "You ought to do it." Business people and bankers and all, from over there.

G: Were they thinking in terms of simplification or--

M: Oh yes, yes.

G: --eliminating loopholes?

M: Yes, eliminating loopholes, simplification, all of that.

G: And then cutting the rate.

M: Bring about neutrality in the tax law, was the big argument, where business makes decisions without having to look to the tax lawyer for advice.

G: But then did these same interests come back and want to leave their particular--?

M: No, these were foreign interests, and I don't know that they had anything special in mind. They never did talk to me about any particular thing, as I recall. But they just thought that we should do something about our tax laws. They didn't want to be taxed on interest that they got from here. (Laughter) Certainly not.

G: The administration seems to have backed away from the reform aspect in order to promote the reduction aspect. Is this--?

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M: Yes. You mean the last [?] bill?

G: Well, in 1962 and 1963.

M: The administration?

G: Yes.

M: No--maybe we did. I don't know that the administration did.

G: Do you think they remained interested in the reform as well as the--?

M: I think they wanted reduction primarily.

G: Really?

M: I think that was it. But we did put some reforms in it, you remember, just enough to say we had a reform bill. And we put in all we could do at the time. Legislation is a question of time; you can do something like--just like Medicare. When it was first introduced it didn't have a ghost of a chance of passing, and then it passed by a good vote when we did pass it.

But I'll never forget, I had Kennedy come to Arkansas to dedicate some dams. We passed this bill in the House in September, didn't we?

G: Yes.

M: It was along about the first week of October in 1962 [1963] he was there, just before he went to Texas in November. He made a statement in his dedication there that whatever Wilbur Mills wants, he gets. (Laughter)

Something like that; I've forgotten just what he said. But anyway, they came out with a cartoon. Here's the President singing "Down by the old mill stream."
(Laughter) Beautiful cartoon.

G: That's great.

M: I'll never forget, going back to Kennedy, Kennedy espoused a request he had made of Congress in a press conference one day. He asked for the authority to increase taxes by 10 per cent and lower taxes by 10 per cent, you remember that?

G: Yes.

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M: And he asked me my viewpoint. I said, "I'm against it." And he called me before I got to the office and asked me to stop by on the way, and I did. He looked at me and he said, "What's wrong with my proposition [that] you'd be against it?" I said, "Mr. President, where would you have a hearing in the White House if you were going to raise taxes by 10 per cent? You'd have to have a hearing." "I never thought of that. Well, you wouldn't oppose just my authority to **reduce** taxes, would you?" I said, "Yes, I would." "Why?" I said, "Congress has given the chief executive and the executive department every authority it had under the Constitution except to raise and lower taxes, and I'm not going to give that up, not while I'm chairman." He never espoused it any more, but he was always for it. He always said he was for it, but he never asked me, never put any pressure on me. He'd understand things like that.

Now, had Johnson been for it, he'd have been pressuring me till he left office to do it. (Laughter)

G: Is that right?

M: Oh, yes. He did; [when] he went after something, he went after it.

G: The oil depletion allowance was something that--

M: Well, I had to work out a compromise on that. I knew the time had come to do something about it, and I had gotten the industry to agree to a 23 per cent rate all across the board, the independents and all of them. Hale Boggs is from Louisiana, and he got up in the committee and offers a **20** per cent rate. So I took that in the House; the Senate put it at 23, then we agreed to it in conference at 23.

Kennedy, you know, had gotten his tax bill passed through the House. He'd agreed to hold the budget for the upcoming fiscal year to a figure not greater than the present rate of spending, which was \$96 billion, as I remember. And Byrd was holding the bill up, was going to hold the bill up in the Senate, until Johnson's budget, to see what happened. And Johnson called me and said he had his budget worked out at \$106.5 billion. "Now, that'll satisfy you, won't it?" I said, "No, Mr. President. It won't get your tax bill." "Well, all right." Hung up, called me back a few days later: "I got it down to 101.5. Now that has to satisfy you." I said, "No, Mr. President, that won't do it, now. You've got to do what Kennedy promised, or Byrd's not going to move it." And then finally he called me and said, "I want you s.o.b.s to know I've outdone you." He'd gone 100 million under the limit. (Laughter) What was it, 98 billion, I guess it was. Yes. He'd gone to 97.9 billion. He was always outdoing you.

G: Was that the key to getting the budget--?

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M: Oh, sure it was. If he hadn't submitted a budget that Kennedy had promised, he never would have gotten that tax bill. And it was a very important tax bill. That's when he was calling me from Texas, so he wasn't calling me from the White House.

G: Another aspect of this tax reform measure was a proposal to have withholding for savings accounts, funds in thrift institutions--

M: Oh, yes. There was a question [that] came up about it. Senator Byrd for some reason didn't want to have withholding as we applied it to wages in those instances, and had suggested this reporting system. The Treasury people told us that they could use it, it would do just as well under that as if they withheld the money. So we put it into effect.

Now they say that they don't have the proper forms, or something, that they can't do it that way, they've got to have the actual withholding. Computers don't work or something; I don't know what it is. But for years they went along with the reporting system, and everybody complied. But Byrd was the initiator of that idea, Senator Byrd. For some reason [he] just didn't want to have withholding on those that were paying interest and so on. I don't know why.

I don't know why I was down there with Boggs and Mahon and McCormack. Well, this was about legislation, I know, because Joe Califano, it would have been his department. Henry Wilson was down there, you know, under Larry O'Brien, and Joe Bowman was the lobbyist for the Treasury. And here you've got Joe Barr, Secretary Fowler; it had something to do with the Treasury Department and Department of Health. I don't remember any of these. I don't know why; I just don't have any memory of them.

Now here he called me from the Ranch.

(Interruption)

G: I know you were an associate of Sam Rayburn for many years. Let me ask you to describe the fight over the expansion of the Rules Committee in the House.

M: Yes. I supported it, and so did all our members. Sam Rayburn wanted to do it; that was the only reason why, I guess, I did it.

G: Did you talk to Rayburn about that?

M: Oh, yes, yes.

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G: Tell me what he said about it.

M: The committee had gotten sort of out of control, didn't do what he wanted to do, I know that. And he wanted to get members on there that would do what he wanted them to do. See, the Rules Committee is always supposed to be subservient to the will of the speaker, and for some reason some of the members had backslid or something, I don't know what. Don't know which ones, even. But I do remember that, that that was the reason for the move to enlarge.

G: Howard Smith, I gather, was the main obstacle.

M: Well, Howard Smith wasn't as much a problem as people generally thought he was.

G: Really?

M: Howard Smith always fronted for the Speaker on rejecting federal aid to education, you know. Sam Rayburn was opposed to that; he didn't want the federal government in the field of education at all. And Smith always reflected that viewpoint. He was contrary on certain things, there's no question about that. He'd gone on there before Sam Rayburn became the speaker, you see, and Sam hadn't had a thing in the world to do with putting him on. And Bill Colmer was the same way, I remember that. So there were some of them that just didn't go with him, and he wanted to get enough that would go with him, and we gave it to him.

G: It was a real close vote.

M: Yes, very close.

G: In sorting out who did what, how much credit do you think the Kennedy Administration deserves in helping to push this--

M: I have often wondered whether they deserved as much as the press wanted to give them at the time, frankly. Because I think it was the Speaker.

G: Really?

M: Yes, and John McCormack. Now, John McCormack could reach over and touch a bunch of Republicans, like C. M. Mathias, and [Silvio] Conte, [Bradford] Morse, and [William] Bates. John McCormack got those people, [Chester] Merrow and [Perkins] Bass, there's no question in my mind about that. And I guess he got [John] Baldwin; I'm not certain. But they made the difference, you know, and [William] Cahill and

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[Florence] Dwyer--these are New Jersey ones, New York ones. I don't know who got [William] Ayres.

G: How about Joe Martin?

M: [Alvin] Okonski, who's very close to John McCormack, from Wisconsin. He could get him in a minute. So I see John's hand there, more than anybody else's, more than Sam Rayburn's, on the Republican side.

And what did you ask me?

G: Joe Martin, Republican.

M: Joe Martin was very close to Sam Rayburn, and probably didn't fight it. I'm not certain. But he wouldn't have tried to pressure these. These Republicans wouldn't have gone with him anyway.

Yes, that's right, they were gone. Cecil King was the last one to introduce that beforehand, you know, that health insurance. Cecil King and Clinton Anderson ganged up on him.

G: Was the expansion of the Rules Committee, do you think, essential to the passage of some of the New Frontier legislation?

M: There's no doubt about it. No doubt about it. It wouldn't have passed without it. Smith would have opposed all of it; so would Colmer, some of the others. And you had it very close; what was it, eight to seven, was that the--?

G: Yes, something like that.

M: Something like that. Two Democrats would have gone with the Republicans, and they would have opposed it, so it never would have gotten out of the Rules Committee.

G: Were you involved in any of the compromise attempts before the fight actually came to a vote?

M: No.

G: Now, you've talked about Medicare, of course. Let's go to page 4 and the highway bill.

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M: Yes, that was an important one. I thought that was--which highway bill are you talking about, now?

G: This was in 1961.

M: In 1961? Oh, yes. Let's see. Yes, that was the year we had a shortage. Yes, yes, I remember now. It was going down to three cents. We kept it at four, yes. That was no problem, really, at the time, to us, I don't think. The initial problem was the institution of the four-cent tax. You see, Eisenhower wanted to have a bond issue, and Byrd and I would not agree to a bond issue. And we told him we'd finance it on a pay-as-you-go basis.

G: Why didn't you want to support a bond issue?

M: My state had had trouble with highway bonds, and Virginia was unalterably opposed to anything but a pay-as-you-go system, you know. So he said, "All right, if you want to do it. But you'll never pass it." Well, we did pass it, and I'll never forget, Sam Rayburn was the speaker; Sam had talked to the members of the Public Works Committee about including in their bill this four-cents-a-gallon increase in tax to finance it. No, no, they wouldn't do it. So he had me talk to them, and they were adamant about it; they weren't going to do it. I said, "All right. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just take the whole damn thing in the Ways and Means Committee, authorization and all, and we'll report it out. And from now on, the Ways and Means Committee will handle the road legislation." Well, they didn't like that either, so they started saying--I think it was Jim Wright [who] spoke up--"Well, would you all put your tax thing in a separate title? We wouldn't have to defend it? You'd defend it on the floor?" I said, "Yes, we'll defend it on the floor." So they agreed then to include it, but it was only that threat of taking away the legislation. Sam Rayburn couldn't do that, you see. (Laughter)

I went to him and told him what we were doing. He was very elated about it, because we had to get this road program out. That was one of Eisenhower's big requests, you remember. But Jim Wright resurrected it, I remember that. But he was adamant about it in the beginning.

G: Did you see it as a public works measure, or--?

M: Oh, sure. My God, look at the employment we were going to create, and all that.

Now, what is it about this highway bill that you were going to ask?

G: Okay. There was a billboard control amendment.

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M: Oh, yes.

G: Let me ask you to go into that.

M: I don't remember. (Laughter) I can't help you. I just don't remember the details about it. I remember the whole thing, that is, that we had the problem. Refresh my recollection a little bit; maybe it'll come to me, about what you know about it, what we did and all.

G: Yes. There were federal incentives for billboard control.

M: States had to control--yes, we gave the states the responsibility. I remember that.

G: And Bob Kerr was opposed to it, I gather.

M: I guess he was; I didn't know that, or have forgotten it. But did we have trouble in conference, is that what you're talking about?

G: Well, yes. I don't know--I gather that there was a degree of control, and this strikes me as being one of the early beautification-type measures.

M: We didn't view it as that. Why did we do it in the first place, what was the theory back of it? Do you remember? I've forgotten why we were doing it. It wasn't for beautification, I don't suppose. Might have been, but I don't remember it being.

Yes, Bob Kerr. I don't know why he was opposed to it, but he was. I remember that. "Conference with House, accepted the Senate billboard control amendment." This was a swap-out, because the Senate accepted the tax on tread rubber, and in the House bill they had dropped that, you see. So that was just a swap-out. We had to do it to get a bill.

G: The taxes on heavy trucks and tread rubber were at a lower rate than requested by the administration.

M: That's right, that's right.

G: Did the Teamsters union play a role in--?

M: I'm not certain whether they did or not. I guess they did, but I just don't remember it.

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But this in conference was strictly a swap-out. They were opposed to a provision we had, and we were opposed to their provision, so we accepted both provisions.

G: Now, let's look at 1962. Here it is.

M: That was the big one.

G: You had the Trade Expansion Act--on the next page.

M: I'll be damned; I had forgotten about Billy Sol Estes back in 1962. It was a long time ago.

On the second page? Yes.

G: Any recollections of Estes?

M: Oh, I know all about that; that's very clear in my memory. The President was not going to ask for it. It was an election year, and [George] Ball, who was the under secretary in the State Department, told him that the Congress wouldn't pass it. And he just told me why. And I said, "Well, Mr. President, I think Secretary Ball's wrong." "What do you mean, wrong?" I said, "You send it up there; we'll pass it in the House. I don't know about the Senate. But you check with the Senate and I think you'll find they'll pass it, too, because Congress is not afraid to act in an election year; that's just his opinion." So sure enough, he sent it up there and we passed it by the biggest vote it ever had in the House, I guess. The Senate went right along with it. But he only did it after the conversation that I had with him, telling him that we'd pass it.

G: Had you polled the key members of the House?

M: No, no. I just knew what would happen. I knew what would happen. I didn't have to poll them on that.

G: Tell me why you knew it would pass, I mean, what--?

M: Just I had a feeling about it, just a sense--it's hard to explain these things sometimes. You just feel it. But the House had always passed it, never had any trouble with the Reciprocal Trade Agreements program. The Democrats were always strong--we were called "free traders" in those days, you know. But then later on, I'll tell you this about that, I begged Lyndon Johnson not to approve it. I thought it was unfair, the agreement that had been worked out was unfair: unfair to farmers, unfair to us generally, because as the European Common Market had reduced the rate of duty, they

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had imposed the value-added tax, which equated the loss in duty exactly, so our goods were going to pay the same thing in the future that they'd been paying in the past, and yet we were giving them great concessions over here. I told him it wasn't fair. He said, "I **got** to!" I said, "Why do you got to?" "Well, it's got Kennedy's name [on it]." I never saw anybody in my life so devoted to anybody as he was to Jack Kennedy, so loyal to him. Unbelievable. And it turns out it was a bad thing for us to agree to. Yes, it did, put us in a bad position.

But it wasn't the first time. Our people in the State Department who had been handling these things always received a political advantage for an economic advantage. And that's why we added in, in this proposal in 1962, a special trade negotiator for the first time. I got Kennedy to agree to that, and I said, "I want him to be directly under you, not under the State Department. I don't want them to have anything to do with it; if we can legislate them out of it, we will." And he wanted to know why, and I told him that I thought that they'd been giving away economic advantages for political [support] at the UN and in different ways, and in different places. And they had. So our trade situation had gotten way out of line as a result of real concessions we'd given in duties here against minimal reductions that they'd given us in return, nothing equal to what we'd given them. Then this turned out to be really the worst one of all, in my opinion.

G: Did you even suggest a candidate for the position, the trade negotiator?

M: No, no. But he put the Republican from Massachusetts that had been in the Senate; they were good friends--what was his name? It began with an H. Goodness alive, I can't--Chris Herter.

G: What did you do to get the agricultural groups to support you on this measure?

M: I never did have any trouble with them. The Farm Bureau was always with us.

G: There was, according to my notes, some concessions to the lumber industry and the textile--

M: Oh, yes, well, we had to do that. Yes. The lumber industry, particularly.

G: Really?

M: Canadian lumber coming in, you know. They still fuss about that.

With the textile people, we made a serious mistake when we were trying to industrialize Asia in picking textiles. [Douglas] MacArthur did that; I don't know who

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advised him. But Japan started off; Korea, the first industries they had after World War II were textile industries. Then they got into other things.

The Trade Bill of 1962; we had the tax bill also in 196--oh, yes, that was the year we passed a trade bill, a tax bill, and a social security bill all in one year. They said we couldn't do it. Passed them through the Congress.

G: There was also the question of granting most favored nation status to Poland and Yugoslavia.

M: Yes; that was political. We've got a lot of Poles in the United States, people of Polish descent. It was political altogether.

G: What was your position on that?

M: Oh, I went along with Kennedy on it, yes. He wanted it. I went along with him. I had a question about it, but I didn't speak out. I didn't have any feeling, really, about Yugoslavia. I didn't know too much about Yugoslavia.

G: Was it difficult to get organized labor to support this bill?

M: No, no. They were supportive. Meany was all for it, as I remember. You see, George Meany was a key player in it. Luther Hodges, George Ball, finally, [the] under secretary of state; he was very enthusiastic for it all along, he just didn't think Congress would pass it. And the President knew what I was talking about when I said that Congress would act in an election year, regardless.

Wait a minute. Organized labor did bring in this adjustment assistance section of the bill; we put that in for them, in the trade bill, you remember. That was a new thing, and we put that in. We thought that was fair.

Well, I do remember, too, in that connection--I've forgotten what their request really was, but the farmers wanted more protection, as I remember, under it. They wanted some adjustments in rates or something, and we talked them out of it, as I recall. Yes. But the Farm Bureau went along with us on final passage. I believe they did; I'm sure they did.

G: The Ways and Means Committee apparently also added in some of the escape-clause mechanism.

M: Oh, sure. That was in their initial request, though. The administration wanted that. It was not our idea, as I remember; that was an administration proposal.

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G: My notes say that there was also the provision for overriding the president if he rejected a Tariff Commission recommendation.

M: Yes. And then too, we authorized the president to retaliate against foreign import restrictions, you remember. That was not asked for by the administration. We asked for that ourselves, as I remember.

G: On the tax bill, you did talk about the investment tax credit.

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M: Yes, I remember that. We had an argument with the business people about the entertainment and travel expenses.

G: Let me ask you to talk about that.

M: That was a part of the administration proposal, as I remember. And of course, any time you take anything away from business, why, they want to clamor and make a protest, and they did. But it wasn't too serious, I didn't think. I didn't think it was justified, their protest.

G: Did the Washington restaurants, for example--?

M: Oh, my God. We were going to close all of them; we were going to close all of them, they said. Yes. I don't know that they--they had a fellow, I believe, that represented them at the time. I've forgotten who it was, but I remember the argument that they made, that we'd close them all. I remember that. Didn't close a one of them. Actually, we didn't put too much of a limitation in the first place.

G: No. But how would you make an independent evaluation here of the possible impact of--?

M: You see, it was a question of sensing it, I think, as much as anything else. You have to look beyond what they say, always. They'll paint the darkest picture they can of what the consequences will be if they're against something that you're about to do, and you have to evaluate it in a little different light. But you have to have a feel for these things, and a sense of it, I guess. I don't know.

I know in 1957 Eisenhower was in office, and I knew in August we were going to have a depression. And I called in all these economists: business, labor, universities, and all. Not a one of them would say it. They all thought everything was fine. We were in a depression right then. I could just feel it. I remember Bob

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Anderson had an awful time, by Christmas, paying bills. He had to float a lot of bills. It cost \$55 million, I think, additional expense, because he couldn't pay bills. And we came back in January and raised the debt ceiling. We'd given him exactly what he'd asked for, but he hadn't asked for enough. And I just knew we were going into a depression. You could just feel it; I could sense it. I don't know how. I couldn't explain it any other way. I was the only one; by myself, and I raised a question about this, that and the other; "No, no, you're wrong, you're wrong. We're in an era of prosperity." (Laughter) "Business is climbing, growing."

G: This tax bill had taken eighteen months from the time it was first introduced.

M: Yes.

G: To what extent do you think this was due to the fact that the administration didn't present a package, that it was something that had to be put together in committees?

M: I don't think that had anything to do with it. They had their ideas in a package. The ideas were assimilated, you remember. I never did like to have them draw a bill, to begin with. I never would introduce a bill. It's much easier to develop a bill in the committee than it is to defend a bill in the committee.

G: Is that because--?

M: Well, they shoot at everything when you give them advance notice. You can build up arguments, if you're given enough time, against anything, even the Ten Commandments, I guess.

G: But again, is this a way to get more consensus, if you come with a--?

M: Oh, sure it is, sure it is. You ask this one to offer an amendment, to put a part in; you ask another one to do it, it's part their bill there, you see. They contributed to it; they have to support it. That's the way to legislate.

G: But do these kinds of compromises necessarily bring you the best product?

M: I don't know. It brings you a product, whereas you might not get one at all.

G: That's true.

M: I'll never forget his message on this.

G: What do you remember about it?

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- M: He went over it with me down at the White House before he ever delivered it.
- G: Could you make any suggestions?
- M: I may have; I don't--I normally would have. But I remember I made one one time, and made his speech writer--what was his name?
- G: [Theodore] Sorensen?
- M: Yes. He got mad as hell at me about it. Not on this, but on another matter.
- G: I wanted to ask you if your affiliation with Harvard gave you a rapport with President Kennedy that you might not have had.
- M: No, I went to Harvard because I was going to be able to talk to Roosevelt. I was going to Congress. My father didn't know it when I went to law school, or he'd never have sent me, I don't suppose. But I always had that all my life, a desire to go to Congress. He's the one that picked Harvard for me, really.
- G: Did he?
- M: Yes. If I was going to be a lawyer, I might as well go to Harvard, he said.
- G: But do you think this gave you a--?
- M: Yes. Maybe so; I don't know. I don't know. No, I was very close to him in the House, to Jack Kennedy, when he came in the House. What did he serve, six years in the House? I guess it was, something like that.

But he had a horrible back. I had him take his shirt off one time and show other members. I never saw a back so lacerated in my life. That was when he was unconscious, floating back and forth across that reef after his boat had been sunk, you remember? Remarkable that he lived at all, but it was an awful-looking thing. And his back bothered him all the time.

Yes, I remember [Paul] Douglas, [Albert] Gore and [William] Proxmire. But Gore used to be very conservative. He got into the Senate and got to be a very liberal person. I'd forgotten about Byrd and Williams, though. They did join them, and I don't know how the Senate ever passed the thing in the first place, with all that opposition. They did undo this business deductions for entertainment.

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G: In the Senate you had an assortment of liberals and conservatives opposing the investment tax credit.

M: It was strange; it was strange, and business was very upset about it, for some reason. I don't recall exactly why, what their real arguments were, but I thought they were unfounded.

G: Let me ask you about the elimination of taxes on rail, bus and water travel. What was the basis for this?

M: Didn't the administration ask for that?

G: Yes, I think.

M: I think they did; I don't recall what their basis was. But it's my recollection they asked for it. We went along on it; I guess they had a convincing argument. The House accepted the conference report on the tax bill by voice vote; I remember that.

Bob Kerr was instrumental in all of this, back in those days. He was for the investment tax credit, as I remember. Yes, he was. But I never could understand Byrd being against it. I don't know why. Byrd was in his dotage, I guess. Sometimes I thought Byrd really didn't know what he was doing. That might have been unfair, but--

G: Well, Williams was against it, too.

M: Well, that wasn't unusual.

G: Really?

M: No, he was unpredictable.

G: Anything else on the tax legislation that--?

M: Now, let's see. The Senate defeated--yes, thirty of the senators voted to strike that investment tax credit; I'd forgotten there were that many. Thirty, yes.

I don't think of anything else. Some of this I'd forgotten. We had this corporate excise thing. That was another bill, wasn't it? Yes.

G: Okay. The welfare reform bill.

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M: Yes. Public welfare amendments?

G: Yes.

M: That was when we developed the Kerr-Mills, wasn't it? Yes. I always wondered why it had Kerr's name on it. I had a letter one time from a woman that said, "I'm as mad as I can be. I picked up the paper the other day and I read where they were referring to you as Kerr Mills." And she spelled it C-U-R.

(Laughter)

She was mad because it was referring to me as Cur Mills.

G: This was designed to increase the federal share.

M: Oh, yes. Yes. It did increase; it did increase. We'd had an amendment, didn't we; I mean a provision that paid the states, some of them, as much as 80 per cent of the total cost? Wasn't it 80/50? Every state got as much as 50 per cent. Some states, based upon the economic situation, got more, 80 per cent. My state is one of them that got 80.

G: My note here suggests that the most controversial change was the provision inserted by Democrats on the Ways and Means Committee to increase the federal share in payments by four dollars a month to each recipient.

M: Yes. Yes, I remember that.

G: Let me ask you about how that was done, the motivation for it.

M: [Reading] "Most controversial change was a provision"--well, we didn't think they were getting enough, actually, to live on, and that was primarily why we did it. The argument was the cost, the argument on the other side was the additional cost. But the committee went along on it; I've forgotten what the vote was, it may have been a Democratic and Republican split. Was it?

G: Let's see.

M: I've forgotten.

G: But this was in effect more liberal than the administration's proposal.

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M: Oh, yes. I know it was, yes. It was unusual for us to be able to get more liberal than the administration at that time. Yes. We did it--no, no, it was in Roosevelt's time, wasn't it, that we adopted the 80/50 formula? It wasn't here. It was in effect for this, however.

G: You also deleted an administration provision prohibiting states from requiring more than one-year residency as a condition for eligibility.

M: Yes, I've forgotten about that.

G: Which was I guess in effect restoring the residency requirement.

M: Yes, it did, yes.

G: Was that part of a compromise, or do you recall?

M: I don't think so. I don't think there was any compromise in it. I think everybody was for it. It was in one bill and it wasn't in the other bill. Did the House put that in?

G: Yes.

M: I think the Senate had deleted it, or not? I didn't think that was in conference. It may have been.

G: The Senate did delete it.

M: Yes, they did delete it. Yes, it was controversial, yes.

G: And the four-dollar increase, too.

M: Yes. They finally agreed to it, though, in the conference, didn't they? Did they agree to the four dollars or not? I've forgotten. Yes, both were rejected.

G: By the Senate, but--

M: It doesn't say.

G: I don't have a note on the conference.

M: I don't either; I've forgotten.

G: What's your recollection of that?

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M: I thought the four dollars stayed in, in conference.

G: I'll check it.

M: I wish you would; yes, let me know. I've forgotten it.

G: What was your philosophy on the residence requirement? Did you feel like a one-year residency requirement was essential or important?

M: No, but I thought it was advisable. So many people were coming in, Mexicans coming across the border and immediately making themselves eligible. It's quite a problem in your state of Texas and Arizona, they told me at the time.

We weren't looking at it from a humane point of view, frankly. We were looking at it from the point of view of the cost to the states.

G: Okay, you've discussed Medicare.

M: Yes, Medicare--

G: I didn't ask you about President Kennedy's Madison Square Garden speech that year, in 1962. It's been regarded as not an effective speech.

M: That's the one that what's-his-name got mad at me about. I was making certain suggestions for changes. I didn't think it was worth a damn, frankly--

G: Is that right?

M: --when he read it to me. And they weren't all in; they may have put a few in, I don't know, but they didn't change the tone of it, the philosophy of it. It was a bad speech.

G: Why was it bad?

M: I've forgotten, but I viewed it at the time as one I wouldn't deliver. I don't remember why.

G: I gather it was not at all effective in [inaudible].

M: No, no. I think that was the primary objection I had to it; that I didn't think it would be. I didn't think it was motivating; I didn't think it moved people. Nothing moved them, really, like his inaugural speech.

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G: Is that right?

M: Yes. That was a great speech, like Roosevelt's "All we have to fear is fear itself."

G: You were meeting with your committee, I understand, when you got word of the assassination.

M: Baker's father was on the committee, from Tennessee, a Republican, Howard Baker's father. He and I were there. I don't know whether there was anybody else or not, but I remember him. A girl came in and said that he'd been shot, that she'd heard it on the radio and came in to tell us. And Baker broke out in tears. Here's a Republican crying about Kennedy being shot. And I adjourned the committee then; I was in the process of hearings. We adjourned the committee, and it wasn't long until the same girl came into my office and told me that he was dead. It was quite a shock. Quite a shock. John Connally had been shot, too, you know.

G: What did you do after that? Did you stay at the Capitol?

M: I did, yes. I had some work in the office to do, and stayed on in the Capitol. The House had adjourned, if it was in session. I've forgotten whether it was in session, but certainly it would have adjourned upon knowing of the death of the President. I went on home and listened to the television; that's all that was on television, and the news about his being shot and so on. That's all you heard all night, practically.

G: Did you have any initial fear that it was a conspiracy?

M: I had no thought about it, as to why it was done. Later on, I don't think there was any question but what Castro was involved in it. Of course, the committee [Warren Commission] that they appointed of very distinguished Americans that investigated it, they didn't find any evidence of it. But Kennedy had incurred his ill will, you know. He had brought all the planes that we had, the fighter planes and everything, on the East Coast, ready to attack Cuba one time, and so on. I don't think there's any question but what Castro had his hand in it. I'll always believe it. I can't prove it, but I'll believe it.

G: My impression is that LBJ shared your--

M: I think he did, too, yes. He never told me, but I always understood that.

I went down there [to Texas] that time--I had been invited to speak to a joint session. Let's see, was a fellow named Smith governor at that time?

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G: Yes, Preston Smith.

M: Preston Smith was governor at the time. He didn't invite me; some members of the legislature [did]. And incidentally, this black lady who's down there now that was in Congress--what's her name?

G: Barbara Jordan.

M: Barbara Jordan was in the senate, was on the committee that escorted me into the legislature when I spoke.

The President found out I was going to be down there speaking to a joint session of the legislature and asked me if I'd come out to the Ranch, said he'd fly me out there. And he did. The agreement was I was going to stay about fifteen minutes, because I had a plane to go back. (Laughter) And I stayed an hour and a half. Couldn't get away. About the time I'd get up to leave, he'd say, "Come on, I want to show you something else." He'd get in that danged convertible Lincoln, with the top down, take off at seventy miles an hour across the field, with no road or nothing, to show me something. Finally ended up he had to take me by and show me the graves of his mother and father where he'd placed them, there. But he was waiting for the photographers to come. He was the darndest guy in the world about pictures. I never saw anybody that loved pictures like he did. He always wanted a picture; every time I'd go to the White House, we'd have to have a picture made.

They came out from Fredericksburg or somewhere. Johnson City, was that closer?

G: Yes, but they probably did come from Fredericksburg.

M: I think they did; they were a long time getting there. He'd called them when he found out I was going to be there. But anyway, they took these pictures, and he was way overweight then. He'd gained an awful lot of weight.

The last conversation I ever had with him was from Miami in 1972. When was this? It must have been in 1970, I guess, when I was down in Texas. Anyway, I was talking about the Nixon welfare program. [Patrick] Moynihan, the New York senator, was in the White House and developed the program. I was all for it and passed it through the House twice; couldn't get the Senate to take it. Along the lines now of what they're proposing to do: educate these people to work, how to wake up in the morning and get ready to go to work, and all these things they don't know now, to try to reduce the welfare load. It costs more money in the beginning, and that's why some

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people were against it then, including Reagan, incidentally. He was opposed to it as governor of California.

But anyway, I was worried about him because he was so excessively fat when I saw him last. I called him from the convention, because I'd gotten a rumor that McGovern was going to ask me to go on the ticket with him. It was just a rumor; there was nothing to it. And I called him and asked him and said, "I don't want to do it." And he said, "Well, you've got to. If they want you to run, you've got to run. You've just got to do it."

G: Why did he think that?

M: I don't know, but he felt strongly that once you were called on to do something for the party, you had to do it. And this was doing something for the party, he thought, I guess. But it didn't happen and I'm glad it didn't, because I wouldn't have run with him. His viewpoint and mine were too far apart. To have run with Lyndon Johnson would have been a privilege, but not with--not that I disliked [him]; I liked George McGovern, but I just didn't agree with him on things. I tried to keep him from getting nominated; that was the whole purpose--I had all of them coordinated, but one fellow just didn't do what he said he was going to do, and we lost it. Maybe he misunderstood, but Governor [John] West of South Carolina had a delegation that they were contesting something; I've forgotten what it was. And he was not going to accept a compromise or anything else. He was going to put them to a vote. I knew that McGovern didn't have enough votes. He lacked, we figured, about three hundred votes of having a majority, and we'd run up a pretty careful check of it. But some of the McGovern people came to him and said, "Now, if you'll just have a voice vote, enough of us will vote aye to pass it." So they worked it out that way, and of course from then on McGovern had the majority of votes, you see. Everybody thought he had.

G: What would have happened if he hadn't gotten a majority?

M: I wanted Hubert Humphrey to have a chance again, and I wanted Ted Kennedy to be his running mate. At that time Ted was acceptable more so than he is now. This was the ticket I had worked out, and I had it worked out with everybody there, practically, that had any influence.

G: Do you think that enough of the South would have supported that ticket?

M: Oh, sure they would. Sure they would. They loved Hubert, in spite of his liberalism. You couldn't help but like him, you know. He came to my state after he'd been vice president, after he went to Russia, you remember? Within a week after he came back,

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I invited him to go down to speak to a meeting of business people. They had about five hundred business people there in a meeting at a luncheon, and damned if they didn't stand up four or five times in the middle of his speech and cheer him, standing up. He made a business kind of a speech. I begged him to do it when he ran, but he wouldn't do it in 1968, when he ran and got defeated.

G: Do you think that he was utilized effectively as vice president?

M: No.

G: Do you think that LBJ was used effectively as vice president?

M: No, no, he wasn't. No, I argued with Kennedy about that. Kennedy sent him to Pakistan or somewhere. I said, "My God, he knows the Congress better than anybody. Let him teach Larry O'Brien what to do."

G: Why wouldn't Kennedy use him in that capacity?

M: I don't know; I don't know why he did it. Now, Roosevelt mistreated Truman unmercifully. He never used Truman right. Truman didn't know a thing in the world about the war, the status of it or nothing else, when the President died. And he was in pitiful shape, in fact, as far as knowledge was concerned, on what to do. I know he was, because I was with him a lot. But I don't think any of these presidents that I have known have properly used their vice presidents. Not like I would have wanted to have.

G: Johnson vowed that it was going to be different with Humphrey, that he was going to be involved.

M: Well, he probably did use him better. He used him better than Kennedy used Johnson, I'll say that. But Hubert could have been the spokesman, really; whereas Johnson didn't make a good speech, Hubert just made a wonderful speech. He could have used him for that purpose more. Johnson was sincere in his speeches and all, but he lacked an ability that Hubert was born with, I guess.

G: Do you want to look at some 1963 legislation?

M: Whatever you want to do.

(Interruption)

M: That was Lister Hill's interest, wasn't it? Yes.

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G: Yes. Did President Kennedy have a special interest in mental health as a result--?

M: Oh, yes. You know he had a sister that had a problem with something. What was her problem?

G: I think she was mentally retarded.

M: Mentally retarded, that's right. Yes, that was the reason for it. And his sister Eunice that married [Sargent] Shriver was always greatly interested in it. I know she took away from our state the leader of our Children's Colony--what we called Children's Colony; the fellow was very good in the field of mental retardation--and had him work for their foundation for years. He's back in Little Rock now. I had her down there to speak. She got acquainted with him and took him away from me. (Laughter)

Yes, John Bell Williams, [W. R. ?] Hull, [Lionel] Van Dearlin.

G: You had the Mills-Ribicoff bill that provided--

M: Yes, I remember that.

G: --282 million for federal matching grants to the states for programs for maternal and child care services, prenatal care for low-income mothers, and--

M: Yes. You know, in that field I was as liberal as anybody that came along down the pike, I guess. I was always much interested in helping people like that.

G: What was behind that?

M: I guess this must have been an administration request, wasn't it? Must have been.

G: But I mean in your own thinking.

M: Oh, just to help people like that. I was always for the downtrodden, you know, that needed help, couldn't help themselves. I say I was always about as liberal as anybody in that field, trying to help folks. But I was very strong for balanced budgets. Yes, I remember that bill. I think it was an administration request. I'm sure it was.

Now, [Abraham] Ribicoff was in the Senate at the time, or was he--no, Ribicoff was secretary of HEW under Kennedy.

G: Well, early on, but I think--

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M: Now, when was this?

G: This was 1963. By now--

M: By now, he was in the--had he run for the Senate after Kennedy's death in 1962 [1963]? He may have.

G: I think he ran in 1962, didn't he?

M: I think he did, yes. I'll never forget--this is a little sidelight, and ought to be off the record--but Kennedy talked to me one time about me giving him my evaluation of [Arthur] Goldberg, who was secretary of labor, and Ribicoff, who was secretary of HEW. And I told him that I thought Goldberg made a better appearance before our committee. And I noticed a few days later Goldberg was appointed to the Supreme Court. And he told me later on that my recommendation had--I said, "Well, if you'd been talking about the Supreme Court, I'd have mentioned Ribicoff, because I thought he was a better lawyer." (Laughter)

G: I guess on occasions when I read accounts of how you conducted your committee, the contrast is Adam Clayton Powell and the Education and Labor Committee, how it was conducted.

M: (Laughter) Well, Adam Clayton and I were always good friends.

G: Let me ask you to characterize him, describe him as--

M: Adam Clayton Powell? Well, he was a womanizer, you know, especially white women. He'd go off down to the Caribbean somewhere with them. He got me to smoking these little black cigarettes, cigar-type cigarettes. They were much stronger, and I smoked them for a while. I always got along with Adam Clayton Powell, always liked him.

G: Was he an effective committee chairman?

M: I thought he did an excellent job as chairman of the Labor Committee. He really did. He passed a lot of the legislation, you know, that got us into federal aid to education. Yes, I thought he was very effective.

G: How did he get along with the southerners?

M: All right. Nobody objected. He was a preacher, you know. He got along all right.

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G: Even in the Deep South?

M: I guess; I never talked to him about it, but he never seemed to have any trouble with them. They always went along with him on his bills.

G: Did he, do you think, more than other chairmen, insist on something for his district as the price for his support?

M: No, no. There wasn't much he could want that he didn't get from the administration, you know, as chairman of the committee.

But he told me this, a very interesting thing. His son and Castro's son were in school together, and he kept Castro's son for a while, never knew that Castro was a communist. But the State Department people didn't even know it. But he could have been close to Castro, I guess. I don't know whether he ever knew him or not, but his son went to school here in the States and stayed with Adam Clayton Powell. His son, they went to school together. Adam told me that himself. And after Castro took over, he said he had no idea the man was a communist. His son didn't say anything about it or give any indication of it. But that isn't unusual; the State Department didn't know that the people that were against Chiang Kai-shek were communist, Mao and that crowd. I had a fellow who was a missionary for years in China call me one time. He was the president of a college in my district, and he wanted to come up and talk to the State Department about the Chinese situation. And he sat there and pled with them to understand that these were not warlords, that they were communists, and we were leaving it hands off, you know. It was just a fight between warlords, Chiang Kai-shek on one side and the rest of them on the other. He had his mind completely made up that they were communists, and they were. He had been there, served as a missionary for his church for twenty years. They don't listen.

G: What was his name?

M: Well, they didn't think so. They appreciated him telling them that, but they didn't believe it.

G: Who was he?

M: His name was--oh, the head of Harding College there in Searcy for years--[George] Benson, Dr. Benson, Church of Christ minister.

But on this thing, I don't have a whole lot of recollection of this bill, either. I remember it, but I don't remember the details. Child health and paternal [prenatal?]

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care for low-income mothers, I remember that part. I was always interested in things like that, never had any argument getting my support on something like that.

G: Do you feel that in this connection you reflected the views of your district, or were you more moderate than your district?

M: Yes, maybe so. I never had any question raised about it. For instance, I always voted for every salary increase that came down the road. Most members from the South would vote against it, you know. But I always voted for it. I never had anybody argue with me about things like that.

G: Does this mean that you felt that you had a good deal of latitude in terms of what you espoused?

M: Well, I could explain things. Jere Cooper, who preceded me as chairman of the committee, from Tennessee, and I were on the Ways and Means Committee for years. And Jere always said, "Now, if you vote for what you think is right, you can explain it. If you demagogue, you're going to find yourself messed up and caught sometime in a lie. You'll say something that you don't mean. But if you vote for something, you can always defend it. Something you like and believe in, you can always defend it." And I found that to be pretty nearly true.

G: Okay, the tax reduction bill you've talked about.

M: What is Art Okun's position? Was he an economic adviser?

G: Yes, Council of Economic Advisers.

M: Yes, I thought so. I'm still looking down this list, here. I remember this meeting with George Smathers, Milton Young, Frank Bow and Gerald Ford. But I don't know what it was about. He was talking to them and he had to go down to a meeting of the National Security Council. He'd taken me down there, I'll never forget, one time, seeing Clark Clifford's name here. I walked in there, and Clark Clifford had on a tux; he was going out later on. It was late in the afternoon; he was going out to something that night. I said, "I'm not properly dressed, Mr. President. I guess I'll have to leave."

(Laughter)

And Clark laughed and he said, "I've got to go to a party later on. Sit down." And I sat there through the damned meeting; it didn't last ten minutes. I don't know what

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they were telling him; I've forgotten. I sat off in the corner, and got up and went back in and we finished our conversation, about whatever it was.

G: This was when Clifford was secretary of defense, is that--?

M: No, he was on the President's economic council at the time. Was he secretary of defense then?

G: Well, he was after [Robert] McNamara.

M: I know, but was that in 1968, along then?

G: Yes.

M: Well, then, he was secretary of defense at the time. I was thinking he was on the President's economic--

G: But he was on that National Security Council; he was a member of that as secretary of defense, Clifford was.

M: Yes, I know he was, as secretary of defense.

G: Another issue in 1964 that I don't have on my chronology there was the meat quota bill.

M: (Laughter) Was that the bill that [Carl] Curtis of Nebraska was for? It seems to me like he had taken a bill, a little innocuous bill that we had passed in the House, struck out everything we had in our bill, and substituted that. Yes, I remember that, now.

G: And there was a need to delay it, which you apparently did. Do you--?

M: Well, I was unalterably opposed to it. I didn't want any quotas on meat. But he did, and the cattle people did, too. It was just stalling on my part.

G: Tell me specifically how you delayed it. Do you recall?

M: I just didn't move. I just didn't take it up. I didn't go to conference, in the first place, and then when we did go to conference I finally got a delay then, didn't I? Yes. I was just opposed to it. I was trying to kill it by passage of time, I guess. Carl and I were very close personal friends, and he just knew I was going to take it, and was quite surprised when I didn't agree to it.

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But I was not for quotas like that. Always, every time anybody mentioned quotas to me, or increasing duties, I thought about the Smoot-Hawley tariff, where that took us. And [Richard] Gephardt, who's running for president, of Missouri, has got a bill now in the House that he's going to offer to the trade bill that would take us down the same path. But labor wants it. He's trying to get close to labor.

G: Were there other means of delaying a bill after it came out of committee? For example, the kind of rule that you requested?

M: I don't think I ever had any desire to delay any bills that came out of the committee. I was always for those bills. I'll never forget, we had a social security conference back then, sometime or other along that time. The House had changed the rules: if you had a conference report, it had to lie at the speaker's desk for three days before you'd take it up, even by unanimous consent. The theory was that that gave the members a chance to read the conference report. But it didn't say anything about one in disagreement. So we had a conference report that we had to pass, because the House and the Senate were adjourning for the year in a day or so, and didn't have any three days for it to lay over. So I got the Senate to agree with me that everything would be in disagreement, which meant that we had to offer amendments on the floor. And then the Rules Committee, of course, added that either a conference report in agreement or disagreement has to lie over for three days, after I did that. But it was a way that I found to get around that rule. We got the social security bill passed, anyway, when it wouldn't have passed.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II

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Wilbur Mills

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