INTERVIEWEE: SENATOR A. S. "MIKE" MONRONEY (Tape #3)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE MC SWEENY

Thursday, March 20, 1969

Mc This is a continuation of the interview with Senator Mike Monroney, and today is Thursday, March 20, 1969. It's 2:30 in the afternoon, and we are in his offices.

Senator, we have been talking about Congressional relations with the Administration, and I did want to ask you about your assessment of the power of the Presidency during Mr. Johnson's term and mood of the Congress, and if these things were tied together.

M: Of course, they went from high to a low point during the years that he was in. Unfortunately, I think that the honeymoon period with all Presidents seems to vary with a high peak at Inaugural and then a gradual erosion as issues and as peaks of personalities and of budget problems seem to interfere. In other words, the average President, no matter who he is, loses strength as the term goes along. Of course, the Viet Nam war caused a focal point for many of these persons who were disappointed in the lack of appropriations for their pet projects or the failure to support pet bills. So it's not unusual.

But the papers and the columnists, particularly--those who have been so devoted to the Kennedy line--made it a point continually to hammer away at the President's slipping power. This in itself accelerates the slippage. And I thought it was rather unfair during the latter years when he was, I think, doing as good a job as could be done under the circumstances--that he had lost none of his vigor and none of his dedication to moving a program

that many of the members of Congress who were criticizing Johnson for would have been afraid to move had it not been for Presidential sponsorship. I think almost all the promises of the Democratic conventions--liberal projects that had been targets for years from Franklin Delano Roosevelt on through to Johnson's time--substantial numbers of these were passed. Slum clearance, housing, the poverty programs, the interstate highway systems, airline and airport legislation, and the development of our economy in a way that when, he went out, reached its highest point in history--but these things happen, and it happened to President Johnson as it has to others during those latter days.

One thing--the President was always willing to listen to the average member of Congress. If you called the White House, you got a call back usually. You'd explain it to the President, and maybe he would turn it over to one of his trusted aides--and he did have very good aides--to either document it or to amplify it so it could be whipped into a position where he would possibly support it. It's not at all unusual that without further ado it came up as a message from the President recommending certain action.

Mc Do you have an instance of this, sir?

M: I don't recall one at the moment. It was almost standard unless it had been found unfeasible, and the President was quick to tell you if he thought it was. But there are so many of these that it just doesn't stick in my mind.

Another thing that he did that encouraged Congressional relations which no other President did was have these bill signing ceremonies and invite down the committees usually--or the committees and those who were leaders in the introduction and passage of bills--to a cermony with television and

photographers and all to make it quite an occasion, and then to hand out the famous Lyndon B. Johnson pens as souvenirs. These were very nice indeed too.

On top of that, to discuss things that he was especially interested in as key points of the program--he made frequent calls to the committee chairmen and invited them to come down. It was quite frequent that you would assemble in the White House in the Cabinet Room with all the committee chairmen--and often Republican minority leaders--sitting around and he would call the roll on what the progress of the bills were. Were they out of committee yet? Had hearings been held? When did you expect to report the bill? If it had passed both houses, when did you expect to go to conference with it? He was almost like a supervisor in a cut-and-sew industry to be sure that the merchandise that had been assembled was ready to be moved to the market of the public of the United States.

He had courage to insist on a 10-percent surtax and worked hard to see that that went over against many people who would rather have not passed the 10-percent surtax in an election year.

Mc: Did you talk with him about the possibilities of that passage?

M: No, it was pretty clear to me that it was going to pass. I wasn't on that committee or anything.

You see, your contacts with the President usually result because you're a manager of a bill, or because you were chairman of a committee, and you discuss with him those things within the purview of that committee. And this was why the committee chairmen were invited, because they were pretty largely the spokesmen for the fifteen or sixteen or seventeen members of the committee that had charge of a given bill, and they could pretty well forecast the timetable of when the bills would move and in what degree

they would move. But he was still a legislative expert although President. And these two things were important. The bill signing which was at the end of the long road, congratulatory and all that sort of thing; then also the gestation period, shall we say, he was there acting as a midwife to help get the project born.

Mc Did you ever discuss with him Congressional relations in general?

M: No, I didn't at all, because he knew as well as I did what was happening, he took such steps as frequent conferences that I've mentioned, and not always around the Cabinet table. Sometimes they were in the Presidential sitting room on the second floor. He would go around and he would ask for suggestions from the Members of what we needed to do and what position we were in and what was troubling us. He was more of a partner, I think, than being aloof as many of the past Presidents have been.

Mc Did you ever discuss with him the developments of the Viet Nam war, as early as from the Gulf of Tonkin resolution or--?

M: No, I didn't shortly after he became President, however, I went to Viet Nam at the encouragement of the Administration. It came from the Secretary of State. [I] went over there. Max Taylor was Ambassador, a good friend of mine, and others that I knew were there. And so I spent a fairly good period of time, a week or so flying around and studying the picture, talking to everybody I could, getting briefed on the civilian situation there, the economy of the country, the reason why we couldn't pacify the countryside. It was the same problem.

But I can say definitely when I came back that the President had not made up his mind as to what he should do--whether he considered a pullout or not, I can't say. Knowing him as I think I do, I don't think he considered to pullout, but I do know he was reluctant toward any further involvement.

At that time, we couldn't shoot. We could merely drive the trucks or drive the tanks or fly the airplanes, and unless there was a Vietnamese along, they couldn't even shoot. You weren't even able to defend yourself. And this was the situation that worried me, and this was why I went to the White House to talk about it. But I was referred to White House advisers who since have become quite dovish.

Mc Which one did you talk to at that time?

M: I can't remember exactly.

Mc Bundy?

M: I can't remember which one of the Bundys...

Mc Mac Bundy?

M: Mac Bundy, yes. I also talked to the Secretary of State and a few others, saying that I thought that if we expected to get out of this thing, we had to at least protect our men over there. We had to do more than we were doing. We weren't making any progress in the country, although the cities seemed to be under pretty good control. I detected a very cautious, if not negative, feeling of the President. This idea that he was gung ho to take us into greater war is fallacious and the result of the cartoonists and others who attributed this feeling to the President, I think, it was obvious, however that the Congress was willing to support stronger military action and felt we had to do it or loss of life was going to increase. And we would continue to have a lessening of our success instead of coming to the termination and getting them to the peace table.

Mc Did you notice a sort of change in outlook in the President regarding the possibilities of a military success there, or turning it into a political realization of a politically negotiated settlement at the end?

M: I think he figured we would have no absolute military success, but that we would drive them far enough to where we would have a reasonable settlement something like the Korean settlement, with a genuine demilitarized zone and the Communists on the North and the free Vietnamese on the South, with some guarantees of our troops remaining there. This, I think, was what he was hoping for, praying for, up until the time he left office.

It's one of those sad tragedies of fate that he inherited this, and the record is not clear from the newspapers and all that this was going on long before he became President. Shortly after he became President, he determined that we would have to at least give our men the right to fight--not be killed by Molotov cocktails, bombing, or all the trick devices that the Communists, and North Vietnamese used in their tactics.

But he did escalate by sending our ships and our Air Force and then had to make a decision to try to interdict the supplies that were coming in. This was one of the things I found, that if we didn't stop the North Vietnamese supplies coming in, we were going to face tougher and tougher war in the jungles and every place else. And this whole purpose in the air attacks north of the DMZ was strictly one of interdiction.

I believe I explained to you the other day about how he told us at one time at one of these sessions with members of the Senate how he was criticized sharply by the press and by the more-or-less hawkish people and by the military for not hitting the military targets in the capital city of North Viet Nam. He explained to me that this was a tire plant that sat right in the middle of the city. He said on one side of it was an orphanage and on the other side was a hospital. And he said, "On top of that, I would have to risk the valued lives of two, three, or more fliers. We would risk killing many

orphan children if we undershot. If we overshot, we'd hit the hospital. He asked, "Do you know how many tires are made in this tire plant?"

And we all said "No,"

And he said, "Thirty-six tires a day. They want me to risk men and a machine costing probably a half a million dollars and also killing innocent civilians. We're going to continue to hit the railroads, continue to hit the bridges. We'll continue to hit the legitimate military targets, but none other."

Mc Senator, I'd like to ask you a little bit about your own committee work in the area of Civil Service and the Civil Service workers. There have been many federal employee pay raises during the '60's. I'd like to ask you what activities you had and how they involved the President and did the initiation of these--the creation of these--come from the Executive Branch. Or were they just given the Presidential approval and influence of Congress?

M: Primarily, these were pay raises to correct the inadequacies of federal pay due to the escalation and increase in the cost of living and then to adjust upward as we could to a parity with other comparable jobs in private industry.

I remember the first one I handled, and this was a very difficult bill. I've forgotten what the pay increase was. It was the difference between the House--which is always more liberal--we'll say a 5-percent increase and the Senate bill that was--we'll say 3-percent. The cost of living was somewhere in between. The President insisted on the 3-percent maximum increase, and he had asked industry to do the same. I may be wrong a little bit on the percentages, but I can't recall exactly. Anyway, he was anxious to not break his own guidelines that he had established for industry by federal pay increases. This created quite an involvement because your federal employee unions--and there are dozens of them--were adamant. They

were united that they had to have the full 5-percent amount that the House had provided; and that they would not take the 3-percent, we'll say, that the Senate provided.

Now ordinarily, in the conference you'd split the difference at 4-percent or something. The threat of veto was made to me a number of times, and I passed it along, I believed he meant business because he couldn't invalidate his own policy toward holding the line on wage increases during that critical inflationary period that we were having.

So we bargained and bargained and bargained for a week or two weeks, back and forth, and in constant contact with the members of the White House staff and also with the House. The House was very adamant and insisting on its higher rate. The unions wanted the higher rate, and we were trying to stay with the President's rate. Finally it became a matter of splitting hairs on it--I don't recall exactly--but we stayed quite close to the Senate bill. It was up maybe half a percent or five-eighths of a percent or something like that. It was that close. The President had agreed to sign it if we held it that close to his cost of living index.

On the others, those came up by recommendation largely through the Civil Service Commission testifying that the adequacy of federal pay required more incraase than it had before, and so they were raised a little bit more, but we didn't have that hard fight after that. In fact, the President supported almost all of the pay increases, as well as he did the increase for the members of Congress, as I remember, and for the Executive level of employees. That was written in the last pay bill. Subject to Congressional veto, the commission that he appointed would recommend the salaries, you

see. And everything is geared to the Senate salaries and the House salaries. So this passed without much opposition.

Remember, we kept it in trading position for a long time because I was insistent we were going to get nearly a billion dollars of new revenue out of the postal rate increase to pay for any wage increases we had. The direct mailers were adamant in not having an increase in rates. I was adamant that they would have the increase. We were a week in conference on that. And these two things were the last to be decided. We'd put those back each time and say, "Well, now, we won't discuss this pay increase"--that came in the House, you see, the last thing in the bill. And we'd say, "We'd like for you to raise this mail rate for the direct mailers." And so that kicked back and forth, and the last minute of the conference we finally reached an agreement. I got my rate increase and the billion dollars, approximately, for the Treasury by raising the rates on many of these people that were underpaying. And the House got what they wanted on this Presidential commission to set salaries for Congress and the Executive members of the government.

Mc Did you develop that strategy, sir?

M: You learn a good many things if you live in the jungle, and when you want something real badly, you have to have something to trade. And it's just as simple as that. And there were others who were helping me.

Mc How did you feel about the appointing of a great many nonpartisan, but ablest, types into Civil Service? I think this was one of the projects under Mr. Macy.

M: Yes. This I think has been very good, to try to have positions and pay scales that would give us the competence that private industry had, because men who were handling billions of dollars are often being paid less than a third or

a fourth rate clerk in an industrial corporation. And we lose people. I mean, if you have them for five or ten years and they have ability and they're going up in their responsibility and their ability to do things, it's very bad to have them stolen by General Electric or American Airlines or some other giant corporation, even though they have good pension and retirement. They like the distinction of working for government. But they don't like for their kids not to have a chance to go to college or to drive with a six-year old car, or that their wife has to wear their dresses that are two years old and all. They're just like everybody else.

Mc Did you ever recommend any people, or did you receive any requests for recommendations of people for positions in government?

M: Only about a yard high--I mean, every year.

Mc Directed from the White House?

M: No, I thought you meant applications from people who wanted you to help them get jobs--I'm sorry.

Mc Asking for requests of suggested people for positions, and this would be emanating from the White House.

M: I think the President has intimated at times that there were possible openings, but usually we take the initiative. If we have somebody of exceptional capability or experience or standing, we recommend to the President, usually through channels, for his employment, and then back it up probably by calling the aides to the President. He usually has men who specialize in that. They search the Civil Service record and all, and this is for Executive appointments, I take it, because the Civil Service jobs all come through Chairman Macy, or they did.

Mc Unless I misunderstand though Chairman Macy also kept a list of people--potential candidates for Executive appointment--

M: He was what we called talent scout, and a very good one. He was one of the President's best aides and the least publicized. I think he picked many superbly qualified men for the Administration, and largely on a nonpartisan basis to try to staff the various arms of government that are of great importance but probably not as prominent as many of the jobs you read about going to so-and-so.

Mc Was this at Mr. Johnson's direction?

M: I'm sure it was, although I think Mr. Macy came in under Mr. Kennedy. But certainly President Johnson not only continued his employment, but made even greater use of him in soliciting people for jobs and scouting around the country for abilities.

Mc We've been talking about the post office--you instituted what is called the air taxi service which became a very successful development in postal service.

M: I've always had the idea that mail should move the fastest way; that because we had always sent it by one means didn't mean we always should, because the Pony Express was an adequate service in its day when it took two weeks to go across the country. Then when we had the trains, we crossed the country probably in four or five days. Then when we had the long distance planes, now it crosses it in a matter of hours.

But for years I've had the idea that we should have the same rate for air mail as we did for first class mail. There should be no difference. It should be delivered the fastest way. I had a long many-year fight on it. I was fortunate enough to stay in Congress long enough to see that realized. So we have what we call "Mail Up." All mail, when it will go the fastest way by air, is sent by air on a "space available" basis regardless of having only a simple first-class stamp and not an air mail. We've got that all over the country today on our trucklines and to our biggest cities.

My additional contribution there was to urge and to have the first trial--I think it extended to about seven states including Oklahoma--of [redacted] with small twin-engine aircraft operators to pick up the mail at the corners of the state and [redacted]eliver it to the central airports of the state. Then if they were going beyond the state, it would be put on the trunkline aircraft and sent to Los Angeles or New York or Miami or Seattle. But if they were going to other parts in the state, then the plane coming in from that other part of the state would have delivered its mail and it would pick up the mail that was sacked up for this region, you see, and take it there. So we have quite a test going on, and I would predict that within another year or so--it has been so successful and the trains don't exist any more to carry it--we can mail a letter from a small town a hundred and fifty miles away from Oklahoma City or Dallas at 5 o'clock. It would be delivered anywhere in their own state, or anywhere in the United States, on the morning delivery the next morning at the cost of regular first-class mail. And this is practically here. We've just got to fill in the gaps. Nothing appears automatically or instantly.

Mc How much interest did Mr. Johnson have in the postal service?

M: I think a great deal, because he came from a small district as a Congressman. As a Congressman unfortunately, you're given much jurisdiction in the post office--particularly used to be--in the patronage appointment of postmasters and rural carriers. The complaints all come in to you, and whatever few letters of approval come in to you. So I think he was well aware, from his Congressional days and later on from his Senatorial days, that mail service was something we had to improve. He started out to improve it and picked two wonderful, wonderful men as Postmasters General. I don't know of any

Administration that has ever been blessed with two of them in a row as well as he chose in the two that he did appoint.

Mc Mr. [Lawrence] O'Brien and Mr. [Marvin] Watson?

M: Yes. Both of those were progressive, able, and as competent as anybody could be and with the vision of bettering the mail service, and both of them left a heavy imprint, both Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Watson. And they were affable and pleasant along with it.

Mc Did you ever discuss with Mr. Johnson the report of the Kappel Commission?

M: No, I never did. I talked to the Kappel Commission. We discussed it, but I could never see the advantage. And I don't think they did really--in turning it into a private corporation, because I'm sure the President didn't want to do this because it is a public service. Certainly the mail, if it was a private corporation, would have to be limited to the big user points, and the big metropolitan cities would have been given priority because that's where the money is. We lose probably on 75-percent of the post offices we serve when you consider the village post offices, the fourth-class, the third-class, the second-class maybe you might break even with but the first-class post office is about the only real revenue producer.

But the purpose of the post office is to unite this country. It was what Benaamin Franklin dreamed of. The thirteen colonies had to be united. We would send mail by stagecoach from Washington and Baltimore to Philadelphia. It would take two or three days. But as each new mode of transportation came in, we moved up--sailing ships, and moved on up to crude wood-burning engines and to--the Pony Express came in there in between--and then the engines. Now we're using almost everything excepting submarines, I guess to deliver the mail. We do use dog sleds up in Alaska and places of that kind.

Mc At the end of Mr. Johnson's Administration, didn't he recommend that some sort of a corporation be formed, or was it private or government corporation?

M: I never could quite understand it exactly. I think what he was recommending was something like a corporation that would earn its money and then be given whatever other money that it needed from government to make up the losses. You see, it's going to be awfully hard to show a profit in making enough money on the big stations to take care of the certain loss, no matter what you did, on the rural mail delivery.

Today we appropriate about two hundred and fifty millions of dollars to the Post Office Department for the below cost operations. It includes your villages, it includes your rural routes, and it includes delivery of your publications. They're subsidized, you see. These big magazines that yell for government economy are subsidized probably as heavily as anybody in the country. It would cost two or three times as much to send their publications or their newspapers if it were on a cost basis or if it was operated by a private industry.

So I think it was the Postmaster General who said, "We could have a non-profit government corporation." In other words, you take the money then that the Post Office earns, which is about seven billion dollars, and that would be the earnings of the government corporation. The cost of carrying the mail would be about eight billion dollars, and so this deficit would have to be made up with appropriations for this short-fall.

Mc What about the periodic criticisms of the post offices that it is simply on the verge of collapse because of the increase in volume, antiquated facilities--?

M: We're working on that. Of course, the increase in the population which, when I came to Congress was about a hundred and twenty million and it's

two hundred million now. These people now are in a more affluent society, better educated. They write a great many more letters. Newspapers print more copies of their newspapers and their magazines. The Red Cross and the Cancer Society and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and all send out more mailing pieces. It's going up by the billions of pieces of mail. How do you handle it! The cost of most of it has had to be paid by human beings.

Now, we have some automation that's coming along where you can read zip code electronically. If you have a pr[illegible] number on the letter so that the electronic eye can read it, you can handle six times the sorting with the machine as you can with one person throwing these letters in a case.

More than that. I saw in Phoenix where on tests the best of the sorters--what they call casing the mail, and that's putting them in slots where they can be tied and put in the proper bags--could do about sixty letters a minute, and that's pretty fast. That's a letter a second for a human being. But these will do six to ten times the number of letters with the electric eye reading them, throwing out the ones that don't have the zip code or the zones that the address is illegible so that it can be picked up and sorted by hand, but moving about six times as many letters per minute--one machine--as an individual can do. So when you get into the billions of pieces of mail, you're going to have to mechanize and it's going to take a lot of money, take a lot of time, and we've still got to work a lot of the bugs out.

Mc Do you think that the patronage should be left within the Post Office?

M: No. In the reorganization, during which I was the chairman of that Senate committee, we prohibited patronage in the Post Office and made it illegal for anyone to seek or consider a political recommendation for an office in the

post office. And it passed with only eight votes against it in the Senate. The House pigeonholed it. But it puts you on the spot. There's no profit in selecting a rural carrier or a post master. It's a matter where there are ten people wanting it, one can get it, so nine are disappointed and you make them very, very mad. And it's not good politics to do that. But it has been that way.

The majority party historically since the beginning of the Republic considered the post office was the patronage of the House primarily. The only thing the Senate gets is the confirmation of post masters or the appointment of rural carriers where there is no sitting majority party member in the House. So, during a Republican Administration, you might have no Republican House member from California, we'll say, so the patronage would to to the Republican Senator, you see, for that state, which is a headache. More mail piles up, petitions, all these things, and it doesn't add to good politics. It's not all bad, because you usually pick as many good men as you can. But it just leaves the man feeling that his job is a political one rather than a job with a big business.

Mc Do you think that that will ever be able to be passed?

M: I think it will because most of the Democrats are sick and tired of it. We don't want it. Any time a post master died in a small town, I felt sorry for his family, but I felt sorrier for myself because that would be the last time I'd carry that town. You'd never find somebody that was satisfactory to everyone and would always leave so many disappointed souls.

Mc Knowing your interest in aviation and that area, I'd like to ask you what work you have done perhaps or the development of the SST.

M: I have always been in favor of it. I talked to President Johnson about it and carried the fight in the Senate, generally, on the funds that have taken

the SST this far. And don't say that it's dead. I was talking about it today to the new Administration. Many of their leaders are for it. It's kind of like turning down the automobile as being an impractical thing or turning down a streamlined oil-burning or electric train--or like Sam Goldwyn who turned down vitaphones, and there's no such thing as talking pictures. Do you know that Robert Fulton, after he invented the steamboat, had plied the waters for a demonstration in upper New York, but it was about ten or fifteen years before the United States ever built a commercial steamboat? England and France--and everybody else--took the idea and the patents, and they started shipping by steam when we still were using sailing ships. That may be one reason we are so far behind in Merchant Marine today.

Mc What did you discuss with Mr. Johnson about this, and about when?

M: I don't remember the exact date. You see, Mr. Johnson is very informal. You could be at a black tie dinner, going through the receiving line and if it was on his mind, you would discuss it with him or he would with you. You didn't usually stop the line, but he didn't hesitate to stop you or grab you by the lapels of your coat and say, "What are you going to do about this bill? Let's get it out."

But knowing his attitude on progress and on aviation and all, I don't think we had too much conversation. It was always in his program which meant that he was for it. That wasn't why I was for aviation progress. I was for it because I felt it was an absolute necessity that we be first, or best, in the development of the new modes of transportation.

Mc Did you work on and have any activity concerning the formation of the Department of Transportation?

M: Only to the point that I was very worried about putting the Federal Aviation Agency in the Department of Transportation. I was hostile to that and had

a good deal of conversation with him about that and with one of his aides. I felt that we had gone through one cycle of trying to get it out of the basement of the Commerce Department where it was submerged in a bigger agency, and aviation was being starved to death on airports--and practically no additions to air traffic control system. We weren't going anywhere.

I authored the FAA Act, got it out, got it separate, had an Administrator that was technically capable of not just a hack political job, had been over in Commerce Department under some Republican Administrations. I just felt the separation was good because it was a new media. But Johnson's staff in our various conversations pointed out that this was a very important creation, the Department of Transportation, and I was forced to admit that if you took FAA out, you'd take about two-thirds of the personnel away from the new Department of Transportation because of the very great importance today in transportation that the air causes, I couldn't argue with that. But I was still pretty reluctant to agree until I found out that they were going to appoint Alan Boyd who had been on the Civil Aeronautic Board--chairman of that board, and who was air-wise and who would be the man who would stand up for safety in the air and expansion of air traffic control facilities and airport facilities--and guaranteeing still the independence of the FAA on accident investigation and safety features of the air. Then I yielded and wrote that amendment into the act.

Mc Did Mr. Johnson apply much persuasion to you to get your consideration of this?

M: No, he didn't. It was mostly staff. We were arguing about it back and forth until it finally made enough sense to me that if we had to have a Department

of Transportation--if we could get it right so that we wouldn't submerge the safety features into bureaucracy--then I was satisfied.

Mc Did you have much conversation with FAA people?

M: Not very much, no. I don't recall any protests. They were very good. If people were worried about what was going to happen to the agency, they didn't approach me.

Mc Senator, could you tell me about the developments and issues that was surrounding the Secret Service protection for the Presidential candidates in 1968?

M: Yes. Just before we finished the Post Office, Treasury, Secret Service bill--all of this in a kind of catchall bill--the Secret Service through, I think, the Secretary of the Treasury came up and wanted to know if we could have a closed hearing on a matter that the President thought was of vital importance. So we went into closed hearing.

Mc Do you recall when this was in 1968?

M: I would say probably August, some time like that. We were late on the bill. This was prior to the assassination of Robert Kennedy [June 1968], I would probably place it in a matter of time, two weeks before, I would say. We had the hearings. Senator Abbott and myself were there, maybe one or two others, but he was minority ranking member, and I was chairman. There might have been some of the others there, but the Secret Service detailed their predicaments, that they were charged with protection of the Presidency and of the candidates for the Presidency, for their families. They were in a fix that they could not command or require the assistance of other governmental enforcement bodies such as the FBI. You see, this was not their duty. Their duty was something else. If the narcotics officers--they couldn't get these others in today's age of campaigning which was coming up.

The President was extremely interested in this bill, and felt like it was absolutely essential that we enlarge the scope and give command to the Secret Service--who, by law has the duty of protecting the person of the President and his family--that they be allowed to require the assistance of the FBI so there wouldn't be any standoffishness. I don't know whether they ever refused or not, but it was not their duty or responsibility. The narcotics agents, the customs inspectors, the marshals, and all of the enforcement officers that we have legion to when a candidate for President was coming through or going to be in the town that these men would be under the direction of the chief of the Secret Service--not just doing their own thing, but doing the one united effort to protect the President and to get the information.

There were several examples of difficulty that they had, the difficulty of the FBI acting on information from another law enforcement agency that someone in the vicinity of O'Hare Airport, Chicago, on a route that the President or a candidate for President would travel going in from the airport, had an arsenal of guns. Well, it was raided, we will say, by the FBI, I believe, and they brought suit against the FBI for the return of the guns because there was no place in the law that gave them the right under the protection of the Presidency to make the raid. So this is one of the things.

So it was quite a hard bill to draft because when you give one man who's head of the Secret Service command over all the law enforcement agencies in the even the President is there, you've concentrated the power in one man of all of the federal government's law enforcement body. To make the wrong decision can play havoc. So this was why we didn't finish this item. We went back to prepare a better draft than we had. We had considered that back and forth, now we reached it.

Mc What had stimulated Mr. Johnson's interest in this?

M: I'm sure the trauma that he must have had with the assassination in Dallas, and the lack of unity of federal enforcement agencies in moving in that situation. He didn't want anyone else to be placed in that situation. He had already announced his decision not to run, but he was thinking of his successors. So he was pushing it, and he let me know he wanted that bill, and he didn't want it delayed. We were waiting for the information from the Secret Service on the new draft that would detail all of the agencies that they could command in the course of their task of protecting Presidential candidate or his family.

And I was awakened at about 5 o'clock in the morning, the day that Robert Kennedy was shot in Los Angeles the night before. The President said, "Mike, have you heard the radio or television?"

I said, "No."

He says, "Well, Robert Kennedy--there has been an assassination attempt, and it looks like he's dead." Bob Kennedy died twenty-four hours after the shooting.

Mc Not yet, but--

M: It was almost certain that it was fatal, I remember. He said, "Now, get that damned bill out today." But it hadn't been his lack of awareness of it. It was just the difficulty of trying to write the bill and get the language that all could agree, and I'm sure that the Department had to circulate the degree of authority that was going to be taken away from the various law enforcement bodies for this one purpose and wanted to nail it down so, for no other purpose, would they have the right to assume the authority.

So we met at about 10 o'clock that day and got the bill out.

Mc I think he in the meantime by Executive Order had them covered--put agents around all the candidates. Was there discussion as to who was a candidate and who was not, or was not major enough--

M: Yes, that was another one. That was a hard one to try to figure out. I've forgotten how we resolved it.

Mc It would have been to the point of stretching the force a little thin, wouldn't it, if we covered every--

M: I know. I think it was left to the decision of the President or something in the selection. I don't recall at this point. But it was a hard one to define. This was one of the things, I think, that was holding us up on getting the bill out, just as you ordinarily would on the first testimony of the need.

Mc Was it necessary to detail officers from the other agencies or bureaus?

M: Oh yes. Because you have a very small force of Secret Service. Unless you can bring in the FBI, which has many places and many town locations where they have full information on dangerous people--things of that kind. Your narcotics agents are very valuable, and Immigration people, you see. So this would multiply the force by a tremendous number, and even if you had the military--This was another important point, you see, because sometimes you want to bring in a large number of the military. Well, they're there without any authority, or they take direction from a major. They could be doing something over there, and no one would have the right to command them over here where there is a point of danger. So you had to have a head.

But the danger was still the one of turning too much power over to the head of the Secret Service that, at a time fifty years from now, might abuse that power to have practically all the law enforcement agencies, and command them to do things that could result in a takeover.

Mc Sir, did you actively participate in the campaign and convention of 1964?

M: That was at Atlantic City. This was such a short convention, and you knew that Johnson was going to be nominated. And all he did was to try to keep the convention alive past the nomination of the Presidency and make it kind of worthwhile, I think, for people.

My personal feeling was that this is where the [Eugene] McCarthy difficulties arose, because you'll remember that most everyone felt that Vice President Humphrey would be the nominee, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that it would be a rubberstamp of President Johnson and Humphrey. People were restless and there hadn't been much of a show. And if the Democrats don't have some kind of a fight, they're unhappy. It's not a contest. You went to a football game, and there's no football game being played that day. You've traveled a long ways, and it has cost you a lot of money.

So the President, I think, said, "We've got to put some life in this convention," and so various names began to be dropped--publicity, and some of it I suspect occurred at the White House. Then McCarthy and Humphrey were both mentioned. Then one time he was talking to Senator Dodd on the White House lawn. I think--and this is just a wild guess, I know him pretty well--that he was trying to put a little bit of life in the convention. He was realistic enough in politics to know that it would be Humphrey, but it would still be a contest. The tragedy was that, when he finally made his choice known, it was at the very hour that Senator McCarthy was having a cocktail party entertaining the delegates from all over the country as a very serious candidate for the Vice Presidency.

Mc I had heard that. Were you at the party?

M: Yes, I went by the party. You know, you're all dressed up, and then no place to go. The decision had already been made. The President would have been

well-advised, I think, to have told Senator McCarthy that his mind was made up, and this would be his choice before he had gone to all that trouble and had so many guests in for the party for the rally.

Mc Do you recall any other events surrounding that convention?

M: It was an unusual convention. I hope I never have to go to another one, and I won't have to, thank Heaven, in Atlantic City. There's no place for people to go there. They are cooped up there on the beach, and it's windy and bad. You walk up and down the Boardwalk once, and you've seen it. It's kind of hard anyway to go when you know that the event you're going for--that's the nomination of the Democratic President--is already in the bag. You feel let down. And politicians, when they can't play politics, get unhappy.

Mc Did you actively participate or discuss with anybody the credentials questions--Mississippi within the Democratic party?

M: No. I remember seeing the thing. That has been going on for years, and a little more emphasis this time. But it never seems to me to be the great story the newspapers made of it. They just had to pick anything really to even keep it on page one.

Mc What activities did you have surrounding the '68 convention in Chicago?

M: I was in a rather standby position on that. I was personally for [Vice] President Humphrey, and felt that he was by far the best choice. I had actively campaigned for him and made speeches in several states urging his nomination. Then I made the introductory speech of Majority Leader Carl Albert from my state, who was the keynoter. Aside from that and trying to help my colleague, my young junior Senator Fred Harris, who was actively a candidate for the Vice Presidency, that was about all that I did.

There was never any doubt in my mind that Humphrey would be the nominee, of course. It was just a matter of choosing the Vice President. I talked

to Presidential nominee Humphrey at that time before the final selection was made--just an hour or two before he made it--and urged on his consideration of Fred Harris as a running mate.

He said that it was between Senator Muskie and Senator Harris. He said, "It's a very close choice."

I said, "Well, I know in that case you're going to make your own mind up." This is the way it is.

Mc Did you ever discuss Mr. Humphrey's candidacy with Mr. Johnson?

M: No, I don't believe that I did. I don't recall it. I discussed it with a lot of people. When you're in politics a long time, you know that you're not going to change the President's mind on who he wants for his successor, although he may not be active in it. And I don't think the President was very active in helping Humphrey.

Mc I got a little ahead of myself here. I don't think we have discussed Mr. Johnson's March 31st speech in which he withdrew from another term as President. Were you very much surprised by that? Did you feel there were any preliminary indications that this might happen?

M: None whatever. I just didn't dream that he wouldn't be a candidate. My whole thoughts were that he'd make a pretty good candidate. And I still think we would have had a far better chance. I think we would have won the election had it been President Johnson on this basis, that people will fight to protect--if they're Democrats--to protect the record and the advancement of that record by the individual who stuck his neck out to create it. It's hard to pass that strong feeling of party loyalty on to a new man.

I don't know whether I make myself clear, but I think Johnson had a solid hold on the hardcore Democrats. When he withdrew, they fragmented,

and many of them didn't come back. Many of them got over on the Wallace side. Many of them got over sort of on the Nixon side. It just left the party, I think, disorganized and not feeling a strong personal commitment that they would have had for Johnson.

There would have been talk in the campaign, and lots of it, about the record of the Johnson Administration. You didn't hear that, hardly at all, in the campaign. You lost the personality. It was like going to a theater and you may expect to see Gertrude Lawrence or a great actor, and suddenly you learn that someone else, no matter how good they are, is going to substitute. It just is not the same as having the original cast.

Mc Would his running at the head of the ticket have improved your chances in Oklahoma?

M: I think materially.

Mc Do you feel that you had been hurt at all by supporting Mr. Johnson's Viet-Nam policies?

M: No, not in Oklahoma. My opponent and I were almost eye-to-eye on supporting the Viet Nam policy. He wouldn't admit it's Johnson's, but it's the policy that we have. I got hurt more than anything else by Wallace. A lot of our Democrats are of Southern orientation in Oklahoma. I still think they might have been good enough Democrats to have voted for Johnson, but voting for Vice President Humphrey, they didn't have the urge or the personal feeling that "He's our man," as they would have had with President Johnson.

Mc Do you feel the strength that Wallace showed was an indication of sort of a more conservative trend in the country?

M: That plus the strong racial thing. You can't take the racial out of this at all. I believe they would have been inclined to tolerate it with Johnson, but they didn't with Humphrey.

Mc I have just a very few rather general questions about the Congress, and I'd like to draw on your very long career there. I think the reputation of Congress primarily is up and down, and particularly down when such scandal develops such as, to go back a little further, Bobby Baker and Thomas Dodd and Adam Clayton Powell of course. How accurate are these sort of sudden developments in Congress or among Congressional members in terms of the overall Congress?

M: They are, of course, distressing. I mean, any time that Congress appears immoral in any way--the question of the integrity of their members or their officers--then the system suffers as well as the individual, and people have a rather sarcastic feeling that generates across the country that the governing body of the world's greatest power has developed moral laxity and a lack of judgment in a way, but still they are deeply disappointed.

I think this was true of the Bobby Baker case. I think it was true to a degree in the Dodd case and the Adam Clayton Powell case. This is a sad thing, but I can remember Teapot Dome--Harry Daugherty and the odd things that happened. I felt sorry for the other party in that. And it was only a very few--Albert Fall, you will remember in the Harding Administration. And it's sad. I don't like to see it, but it's one of those things. Human nature being what it is, and we have got one hundred Senators and four hundred and thirty-five Congressmen. And you've got lots of aides and lots of people involved in helping the Congress all around, and there are bound to be fault with a few. I was just noticing the escalating costs by some ten times the normal of the theft of securities in Wall Street by their aides. This is not the brokers, but the people who work for them. They can't find a way to stop this and it's running into tens of millions of dollars.

I'm not defending these people, because I was on an ethics committee that brought about a censure of Senator Dodd for allegedly using funds which had been given to him for his campaign for some of his personal use. The Adam Clayton Powell affair apparently was based on collecting money for travel and official business when it was used primarily for his private entertainment. The Bobby Baker case was using the prestige of his position as a member of the hierarchy of the non-elected staff to his own financial benefit in investments and things of that kind.

Mc Did you ever discuss any of these cases with Mr. Johnson?

M: No, I didn't at all.

Mc And then of course the later ones--he was President--Mr. Dodd and Mr. Powell?

M: No. I think the President felt, as President, that it was Congress' duty--and knowing Congress, that we would have to take some action, which we did. Of course, the Adam Clayton Powell action was taken by the House, not by the Senate.

Mc During your long tenure in the House and in the Senate, who would you name as the most powerful figures there and why?

M: That's kind of hard to say. I believe Senator George was one of the truly greats--from Georgia, chairman of the Finance Committee. Alben Barkley; Bob Taft; Senator Russell, of course, who is still there; Senator Stennis; Senator Kerr; Senator Dirksen; Senator Vandenberg. If I thought a while longer, I could think of some others.

Mc Were these people powerful because of the committees they were chairing?

M: Partly. Of course, the committee doesn't necessarily make the man. I've seen men bust out badly who floated along in pretty good shape as long as he

had minor responsibilities. Suddenly they found themselves heads of most important committees, and they failed to measure up. But by and large, the ones who do become recognized as powers are men whose committee positions have given them demonstrable performance of the difficult duties.

I should have said Senator Carl Hayden, who was president pro-tem, and who has retired. He's one of the truly greats, I think, in the Congress. He was started out with statehood in Arizona, author of the first U.S. Public Highway Act, and dozens of other acts, and chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and many other things. I don't want to make this list an exclusive one because there are all degrees, but I was just thinking of a few.

Mc Do you think the power and the prestige of Congress have deteriorated during the '60's?

M: I would say that the job has been magnified from the norm of the early parts of the twentieth century up until 1950--World War II, we'll say. The task has become twice as hard, or three or four times as hard. We've gone into new fields that are difficult--the management, the federal aid to education, racial opportunity, equality, slum clearance and housing--many avenues of social progress that have imposed a pretty good infrastructure on the normal duties of government that we have had to--I think if we were to be progressive--have had to go into these areas. They're hard to manage, and so consequently Congress looks bad. We don't have anything to do except write the laws and make the appropriations. We don't manage these affairs, but we share the blame on anything that doesn't work to perfection. For that reason, I would say that the slippage would be that one--

(telephone interruption)

Mc Senator, Mr. Johnson, during his Administration, of course went from a very great mandate to widespread unpopularity, or at least he had very severe public criticism. What do you think is the main reason for the development of his unpopularity?

M: Well, to begin with, I think I would say that President Johnson was a strong President. Strong Presidents coming in, as Roosevelt did, have great support because the country is in somewhat of a decline, and they rectify the mistakes. But you bring about the reforms and you bring about the corrections, you make good on the platform, and you find that each advance steps on some toes. Mixed housing is one; racial thing is another; improvement in the level of the unemployed or the lower third of our population. And this becomes, instead of a virtue, after it is accomplished, becomes a sin. Opening of vast economic opportunities to the unskilled by skilled training.

So I like to say what it's kind of like in Oklahoma. The sharecroppers of the "Grapes of Wrath" days have become ranchers. Their sons, who would have no opportunity have gone to vocational trade schools and have become industrial workers. They live in suburbia today. They try to keep up with suburbia standards, with air conditioning bought on the installment plan, or with automobiles that are of higher standard than the beaten up jallopies that their families once had. Their daughters have to be as well-dressed in the junior high school as the banker's daughter.

So they blame Johnson, I think, for the high cost of living. Actually, it's the cost of high living. These people are living--rightfully so if they can manage to chin-it--in a better status in elevating upward. Everybody likes this, and this is the pleasure of climbing in an airplane. When an airplane starts to come in, some people get sick and some people get nervous,

and they don't like to go down. So we have this standard of living to maintain. The government aims--as Johnson's was, and as the prior Democratic Administrations--were to improve the status is catching the backlash from the income tax cost that puts them marginal in meeting their expenses and paying their taxes. So it's an adjustment period that we have had to go through.

But most progressive governments, once you've achieved the reforms, become unpopular because the people then have to pick up the tab. It's like buying a dress that you love and you think it's wonderful, but when that bill comes in next month, you wonder why you didn't get something a little cheaper, you see.

Mc Do you think Mr. Johnson lost his so-called consensus through this?

M: I do. But I blame the press. I think Johnson has been treated by the press worse than any President in my thirty years, and more unfairly. And almost all with the favorite claque of columnists and all who today seem to dominate the opinion-forming processes of newspapers, rather than individual editors writing it, has given sort of nationwide airing to their personal prestige--maybe feeling they haven't been treated as well, or maybe being ignored, or maybe not being given the status symbols that several of the prima donnas of the press feel they're entitled to from a President because yesterday [they were] what we used to call a legman covering Capitol Hill and just walking around getting news to a famous writer. I think they have formed an opinion that was very, very damaging to President Johnson, and far beyond anything that he deserved as a result of his official or unofficial duties.

Now they loved the decor of the Kennedy Administration. The Kennedy Administration, they thought, had style. It was like the country boy coming

to New York and seeing the stylish things and the elite. Johnson was just himself. He would receive the press in his bedroom in his pajamas at 7 o'clock in the morning if he had a good news break. I'm sure President Kennedy would have either gotten dressed and gone downstairs and called a press conference in the Oval Room, or would at least have waited until he got dressed. But Johnson felt, this is all right, this is important news, and let's give it to them. I think he was overly friendly, overly anxious to please. But in doing so, some of the more dedicated people who didn't like Texas or Texas attitudes didn't approve.

Mc How do you think that history will view the Johnson Administration?

M: I think it will be very kind to the Johnson Administration as a very progressive one, one that the personality of leadership might have been beyond the ideals of Park Avenue or places like Georgetown, but not an Administration that failed in any way to try to meet the needs of the growing, expanding people, and to leave for history a great great record of achievement. Period, paragraph, end of story, huh!

Mc I have no further questions. Is there anything that we have not covered that you'd like to talk about?

M: I don't know of any.

Mc I want to thank you very much, sir.

M: You've been very kind and very patient here.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By A. S. Mike Monroney

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

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3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed A. S. Mike Monroney

Date June 3, 1972

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

Date March 11, 1975

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