INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. O'Brien's office, New York City

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G: Let me start with a couple of general points that were raised by your papers. One, the problem of a congressman who is following a project through the various stages that it has to go through in the cabinet department and agency and BOB, and so he's fairly well abreast of each stage. Is it possible for him to learn, just through keeping abreast of it, the outcome before the White House does, or before you do, or the member that you want to notify first?

O: Well, depending on his seniority in the Congress and, obviously, his direct relationship to the project by virtue of his committee assignment, that was conceivable and undoubtedly occurred. We made every effort to husband all of this information to impact it to the best of our ability and to the point where we worked out a program with the Bureau of the Budget, as well as all the departments and agencies, to try to get that first notice in there and to have the member--the friendly member--have the opportunity to make the announcement prior to the department, agency or any other governmental source. I think even the fellow that might have been tracking a particular project by virtue of his committee assignments, even under those circumstances, would probably not go public until there was a definitive, on-the-record decision. But I must say that if that were the case and he had the knowledge that you suggest, then our call to notify him would not have the impact that we'd like it to have.

But I think those were unusual situations and I must say that it was a dangerous area in a lot of ways. I think our concern really went to a public discussion of this procedure. There was nothing basically wrong with it. We were not, in that process, endeavoring to dictate every decision in government. It was purely an effort to maintain and improve this individual relationship with these people.

But you always had to be concerned that this could become a matter of public discussion and it could be reported in such a way that it would look devious. We had that occur. As I recall, it might have been the ***Wall Street Journal*** that made an effort to dig into these procedures and failed. There were a lot of denials of procedures internally, I'll admit to that. We carried it to a considerable extreme in the case of the two senators from Maine, Ed Muskie and Margaret Chase Smith. Bob McNamara became very exercised about this procedure, particularly when he was confronted by Senator Smith and accused of giving advance notice to Ed Muskie. Ed Muskie seemed to have statements in the Maine newspapers regarding decisions that were affecting the state of Maine; military

projects, bases in Maine.

She was on the committee and McNamara became so concerned about it that he went to the President and said that he thought that this procedure should be closed out because it was embarrassing. The President discussed it directly with me, and the President and I quickly agreed the project would continue, the effort would continue, the procedure would continue. It was obviously very helpful. But, in order to pacify Margaret Chase Smith, we set up a situation in which Ed Muskie sent us a letter objecting strenuously to some procedure under which Margaret Chase Smith, in his judgment, was given notice ahead of him when it should have been joint. That was made known to Margaret Chase Smith--Ed Muskie was concerned because he felt that she was getting preference because of the committee on which she was serving. That closed that out and we heard nothing further.

But that one media effort to delve into this procedure, which didn't cause any waves, was just about all I can recall that occurred. Now, it depended on the district, too. Coming from Massachusetts--I was from the Second Congressional District--there was a congressman by the name of [Edward] Boland, who was a lifelong friend of mine, as a matter of fact. Just to apply this to the individual congressman, Boland would receive this twenty-four or forty-eight-hour advance notice and he would contact the newspapers and media in his district with a statement. And that would be page one news usually. Now, that was the nature of the district. The largest city in the district was one hundred seventy-five thousand, the city of Springfield, [and there were] a lot of smaller cities and smaller communities. And the impact was there and it, obviously, was of great assistance to the Congressman.

However, you could be one of fifteen congressmen in the city of New York, and perhaps there's very little of this that was of any great help because in New York, just as any other major metropolitan area--but I think New York is obviously a good example--congressmen get lost in the shuffle. And their effort to get into print in New York is a very difficult one. So perhaps some project affecting Greater New York would be shared by so many members of Congress that it would very much lessen the potential impact.

But overall it was a resource, it was as simple as that, and a resource that we [used] on a trial basis in 1961. [We continued] refining it operationally and indeed, mechanically, so this was an automatic, day-to-day procedure and encompassed everything we could put our hands on in the executive branch of government. As we refined that and noted how meaningful it could be in most instances, we were not going to relinquish that because of Senator Smith, or indeed Bob McNamara, who in fairness to him, did not have a political background. He was not as sensitive to the PR value of this in terms of an open door up on the Hill, if not the actual vote of a member in a given set of circumstances.

But it was of concern to some of the people in the administration. I think an example was referred to in a memo [by] Elmer Staats. Elmer was a career fellow and he

was at Budget and that would be a source in that you could be advised and counselled by Budget, [which] in turn would probably give you a little lead time in some departments and agencies at times so you could anticipate these opportunities. But there was a recognition on the part of the people there that this was something that we valued, that it was not in any sense suggesting to Budget or anyone else that they take action in any way. It was just after the fact that we wanted the information, but before the general procedural announcement and that was all.

G: Yes.

O: And they accepted that and recognized it and, consequently, even people that would not be politically oriented or not perhaps have direct concern about the legislative process were very cooperative and understanding. The guidelines were established and were confidential. As time went on and it became more refined, it became an adjunct of the operation of the Congressional Relations office in the White House that was as automatic as opening the doors each day.

G: Well, how specifically did you bring all the departments and agencies into line in following this procedure?

O: Well, you started with a basic premise, and I'm sure I'm going to be repeating myself on some of these things but editing will take care of it ultimately, I hope. But where was the starting point, what was the concept? First of all, and I think every president-elect and his associates go through this process and take it very seriously. Now that you have the reins of power, you are going to make every effort to ensure that the executive branch of government reacts to your interest, your goals. That means that you want to put in place in every important slot in government people who a) are competent and b) very importantly, share your goals. And that, over a period of time, has frustrated every administration in my judgment; actually placing these people in position.It frustrated us. But in the excitement of an approaching inauguration, the day the President named his cabinet and the rest, we were not oblivious to this. We didn't have it refined or in some documented form. But the President and I, and the President and all of us--the President-elect--knew where we wanted to go and that the control aspect was going to be extremely important. We were going to exercise every effort we could to bring it about.

For example, and I think this was without exception, as the President designated his cabinet members on the steps of his home in Georgetown, or whatever form was taken to make these announcements, immediately, that designee was advised that his first order of business was to sit down with me. At that time I was staying in the Mayflower Hotel, and I had arranged, whether it was just a one-on-one session or dinner in the suite, that there would be a solid, in-depth discussion of the goals and the aspirations of the administration and what we would envision from the White House to be the team role of each cabinet member. And it varied somewhat. Stew Udall would be very familiar with the procedure; there's no need to try to outline it or detail it to Stew, so you chat with him rather informally. With Doug Dillon or Bob McNamara, it would be necessary to review

all this very carefully. These were men of high quality; you wanted to be absolutely sure they weren't, right at the outset after they're appointed, receiving suggestions that could remotely be construed as anything but a proper manner of doing things.

But you really took off from one premise--everything focuses on the President. Every action taken, every department and agency must focus on the President. It's the President's program; the President is the boss; the President must at all times be cast in the best light possible. When negatives occur, the responsibility must be absorbed as much as possible by the cabinet member or whomever. There's only one program, and, while the effort will be expended by each cabinet member obviously in behalf of the program that directly involves his department, he has the responsibility to be part of the overall effort to bring about the enactment of the New Frontier program. It is essential that all top-level appointments be cleared by the White House. If the cabinet designee has an interest in making a recommendation in a given instance, it certainly will be looked at, and looked at carefully. There will be times, however, when the cabinet member will be informed as to who the President would like to see in a designated position in the departments and agencies, and that has to be an accepted procedure. And all of that, of course, was the beginning of an effort to bring under the direction of the White House as much as you could of the executive branch of government in the interests of the President. There were a couple of isolated instances that I recall where there was some slight resistance, or some resistance, to this procedure as time went on.

G: Can you give specifics here?

O: Well, interestingly enough, if a cabinet member had a political background--some did--there was an acknowledgement of this and acceptance of it. This wasn't anything surprising at all; this is the way the procedure would be and certainly should be. But if you did not have that political background and you were not probably as sensitive to this, then you had to adjust to it. The adjustment process wasn't difficult, because there again, you know that there's one boss and it's the president. Everybody is on the team, but it's the president you look to at all times for leadership. Your responsibility goes to the president in every aspect of the performance of your duties and responsibilities. That's nothing that isn't obvious. But the adjustment to it in a couple of instances was not immediate and there was at least what we perceived to be some foot-dragging. I think one member of the original cabinet of President Kennedy that had difficulty with it was the Postmaster General, Ed Day. Ed talked to me on a number of occasions and to others in the White House and he felt that "White House staff," quote, unquote, were interfering with the conduct of his office by making suggestions to him of one sort or another which he resented.

G: These were like where to build the post office or jobs or--?

O: Some of that, but even to the point of suggestions as to commemorative stamps. You can picture the pressures being exerted in that area at that time, and I learned it directly later on as postmaster general. I understood it, but it became part of my own direct activities

for which I took certain steps by way of forming committees that were helpful. But if you, as the postmaster general, receive a call from Larry O'Brien, and it is suggested by Larry O'Brien that it would be in the interest of the President and the administration and our relationship with the Congress to have a stamp, of the fifteen or so commemorative stamps that were issued each year, and the Postmaster General felt that perhaps there was somebody else or some other entity that perhaps should be so honored, I think that perhaps Ed Day would feel, "I don't understand this, there seems to be politics in this." Well, of course, there was politics in it.

But I mention Ed because he came from a business background. He was a senior officer in a major company. He came from the West Coast. He had a close association with Adlai Stevenson initially. He was an early Kennedy supporter. He was recommended to us when we were sorting out cabinet suggestions by some people on the West Coast. The President-elect had an interest in having a businessman in the cabinet to achieve balance. Anyway, as the process unfolded, Ed Day became the designee, to his utter surprise and amazement because he never sought the post. And I remember rather vividly Ed being asked to get on the earliest plane he could to come to Washington for a discussion with the President-elect, and [he] had no idea just what was to be discussed.

Well, that was the background of it. Now, Ed Day was a very able fellow and, as a matter of fact, I believe stayed pretty much in postal activities in the private sector after he left the Post Office Department. But some of Ed's stated concerns became a matter of general knowledge in the White House and of specific knowledge to the President. There were discussions regarding Ed to the effect that he seemed to register more objection to this procedure than others and, after all, the Post Office Department was a source.

G: Sure.

O: But Ed I don't think really enjoyed being in that position. I can understand that. That was contra to his experiences in the private sector in the high-level positions he had held in the business community. He did not, of course, have the political background that would probably help in bringing him along on this process. Whatever the reasons were--and there was nothing personal and there was respect for Ed and I respect him to this day. I knew him probably better in later years than I did at that time, because we were in touch with each other on a number of occasions in postal matters in later years. But Ed chose to leave the cabinet. And I suggest that there were probably a couple of other situations somewhat similar, that you do have a little of that. I don't know whether arrogance was shown toward Ed. That would not be my way of doing things.

As part of this communication process, it was well understood throughout the administration that a cabinet member would make himself available promptly in response to a Larry O'Brien telephone call. Now, that didn't mean that everybody on that White House staff could pick up the phone and call a cabinet member. Maybe others did and made attempts in their own way to exert pressures of one sort or another; I'm sure things like that probably occurred. And that would aggravate me. It would aggravate me,

because I was in that position in later years. But if it was held to the President and his immediate designee, so to speak, the cabinet member should not react adversely. He might want to discuss it or he might even object to a particular appointment. If so, that appointment may not be made because, after all, you weren't going to foist upon a member of the cabinet an assistant secretary or deputy that was not going to work effectively with him.

So a lot of give and take took place. This was not a matter of just calling him in and saying, "Here is your deputy, and here are your assistant secretaries." That was a matter of discussion and oftentimes those decisions were made jointly. I don't want to belabor that. I don't want, also, to suggest that we were all just nice folks, that we weren't a little hard-bitten, a little driven. After all, there was an overriding objective and every resource had to be put into play to achieve that objective.

So I would say without question--and that applied over the years that I was involved with both Presidents, Kennedy and Johnson--that the understanding and cooperation at the cabinet level were good. There was a rare occurrence when--and I have certainly understood--for example, when Bob McNamara became concerned. After all, if I were up there before Maggie Smith--and Maggie Smith starts to berate me for a procedure that obviously was in place--and I'm sitting there saying I'm doing the best I can and "Well, I'm not quite familiar with that, I'll look into it," sort of thing, I can understand that if a fellow has had a long political background, he probably can play that one out. But if you don't and you don't really like the procedure anyway, you're apt to have strong views concerning it.

But that was part and parcel of the initial effort to try to have as clear an understanding as you could, [but] that was a role the President-elect did not want to undertake. If he were sitting with a fellow who was ultimately his designee for a position in the cabinet--probably after consideration of any number of others and after the decision was made and the announcement was made--it wasn't seemly for the President to say, "By the way, Joe, I want to be sure you understand how this works and how it's played out." That was a role I could undertake. I had an understanding with the President-elect that it was simply in the context of explaining how we envisioned relations with the Congress and how efforts in the legislative program would play out and, also, that we had political responsibilities in terms of appointments and assignments. No one was going to be foisted on any of these people who was inept and not fully qualified.

G: Well, in the case, let's say, of the Labor Department where you had a large interest group that was close to the Kennedy campaign, would they have more influence in the naming of subcabinet positions?

O: If they chose to exercise influence, they could have more influence to some degree than perhaps other private sector entities. But interestingly enough, there wasn't that pressure. I think that went to the basic feeling of organized labor as reflected in George Meany's style--and he was the fellow that was in place during our years--and a desire on the part of

Meany and organized labor and COPE to preserve an independence. And, also, when you think about it, [to] be able to react as they saw fit without being inhibited by favors rendered to them. There was not, as I recall it, any pressure points involving labor that impacted on the top-level designees in the Labor Department. I'm not suggesting that the President-elect might not talk to George Meany about who he had in mind as secretary of labor. I'm sure that you would not be naming people at the top level of the Labor Department if the AFL-CIO, or indeed the UAW, had strong objections to that individual. But that never occurred, because we were in a friendly climate and there were opportunities to name people that labor would have no objection to.

As time went on, labor preserved its rights. We weren't at all times in accord. Even in battles over amendments to legislation, whether it was minimum wage, the whole Taft-Hartley efforts and all the rest over the years, there were times when labor was not enamored with our decisions or our actions. But Andy Biemiller, who was George Meany's key representative in the legislative process, was a former congressman who had been long with the AFL-CIO, was respected on the Hill and a fellow I found very easy to work with. He had a good understanding and he was a dedicated labor man. [Alexander] Barkan is another example of a fellow who fought labor's battles. They fought them with everything they had, intensively. But I don't think they wanted to be inhibited by any even indirect suggestion that "Hey, you shouldn't be in strong opposition to this particular action that's being undertaken, because look what we've done for you. You've got your pals in place in the Labor Department." They preferred it otherwise and that's the way it was.

G: On the point that you mentioned earlier, the relationship between the White House staff and the cabinet officer, you've been both. And I want to ask, on the basis of both perspectives, was it ever a problem to establish whether or not the White House staff member was in fact speaking for the President rather that just himself or his own office?

O: Not that I recall. While I can only speak for the Congressional Relations staff, or I guess I could speak generally, certainly, it seems to me--and I'm sure this occurred in any number of ways--that, for example, Ken O'Donnell, because of his acknowledged close proximity to the President, calling a cabinet or subcabinet member would be understood by that person as an authorized call. Certainly any call I made to the cabinet members, or they made to me, probably 90 plus per cent of those calls related to the legislative program, to requests of cabinet members to do certain things, make certain contacts, or discussions about progress or lack of progress in a given instance. Each cabinet member, I'm sure, or agency head, would not consider that a discussion with me was not a presidentially-approved discussion; that I was [not] in a role that was totally accepted as a spokesman for the President. That applied after a relatively brief period of time on the Hill, and I've reflected on that before.

G: Yes.

O: The operation on the Hill was far more sensitive than operating with your own colleagues

in the executive branch. That kind of activity within your own group was no problem at all, but certainly on the Hill you had to be very concerned about how this would unfold. And certainly, if I were a member and if I had known Jack Kennedy while we had been colleagues and now he is the President, it would be kind of nice, if I wanted some action in a given area or I wanted to suggest legislation or get concurrence on some action I was going to take as a committee chairman, to just pick up the phone and call the President. Now, obviously, the reality is that no president is in the position to be constantly engaged in that sort of activity. But by the same token, if you're up there on the Hill, you want to test the procedure. You want to at least find out about this fellow O'Brien, who may not be very well known to you, indeed, determine if you can get a definitive answer on whatever you're seeking. And if he is totally supported by the President, you don't have any qualms about it, so there's no need to be going to the President.

President Kennedy early on was sensitive to that, too, and he started to receive some of those calls and he would give them the same response, "Have you discussed this with Larry O'Brien?" "No, I haven't." "I'd urge you to do it because Larry is in the position to work it out with you and certainly he'll report back to me." There was only a very brief period of time when bypassing Congressional Relations and going directly to the source was really the case. There was an acceptance of that, and it was evidenced in a variety of ways, so I felt comfortable. By the same token, once that was established, another responsibility was placed on me and the people that worked with me. When you did make a statement or take a position you'd better be able to back it up, and you had to be sure of the President's confidence in you and your judgment. So you reflected on those factors when you made any comments or responses.

But, initially, how do you go about something like this when, at the outset, you try to determine what resources you have, how broad and deep a team you can develop to carry on this task of promoting a program with five hundred and thirty-five members of Congress? You just try to ferret out these elements of resource and coordinate them. But, as I said, in the climate of the sensitivity of separation of powers, there lies the difference. You can exert pressure in the executive branch, and, if a fellow wants to defy you, then that's too bad for him. I would hope you wouldn't be arrogant in the process, because we were all on the same team. But there's that separation up there on the hill, and what you're trying to do is move in with people who are decision-makers who, hopefully, at no time will feel you are just being too wise, too smart, or too forward.

That was really what it was all about, and a lot of it was trial and error. On reflection, I can't tell you when we decided that we would have regular meetings during congressional sessions in the White House with the top congressional liaison person in each department and agency. It happened relatively early, but it didn't happen Day One. And all of these other refinements--were we thinking of the use of the ***Sequoia*** in January, February, March of 1961? These refinements came bit by bit as you tried to implement the process you had established.

Before discussing the role of the President, let me reiterate that the Congressional

Relations process started with a president and a staff member he designated who were unsure of how it should be undertaken and unaware of the limited informal activities in this area in past administrations. From Day One, the need to husband the President's time and safeguard his influence became self-evident. You could not allow the effort you were undertaking to reach the point where direct contact with the President was simply a routine matter on Capitol Hill. Presidential contact had to be something that impressed a member of Congress and happened on rare occasions. When he received a direct call from the President or an invitation to come down to have a meeting with the President that was impressive and the Congressman or Senator reacted accordingly. If a member reached the point of saying, "Oh, hell, there's another call from the President," then you lost the single, overriding resource you had available to you.

G: Sure. Was LBJ more inclined to have a day-to-day contact with members of the Congress than Kennedy was?

O: I would say yes. With Kennedy I would try to husband his time by very carefully developing the effort that I'd like to have him make in a given instance. If that meant having six members of Congress to the White House because we have clear, definite information that they are very much in question and that only presidential effort could bring them into line, then I would make that request to the President. I would be very, very careful to make it only when I had determined we'd exhausted every possibility and there was one last opportunity and that was the President. I would make that request, and I would not be hearing from President Kennedy saying, "I haven't heard from you in a week about calls you want me to make or some social occasion or some meeting with a member. What's going on?" It was quite different. He would hear from me, and I would make the request. On every occasion, sometimes perhaps a little reluctantly, the President would undertake it. I think he felt that these contacts were kept to the absolute minimum, and he knew the motivation would have to be one of last resort--that there was a need for presidential participation.

Now President Johnson would inquire. As we talked about legislative struggles and I would give him a current version of a head count, he would note that there were members who were not listed right and they should be, in his judgment. My job then became somewhat different, because I would want to keep him removed from direct contact as much as possible, again feeling if you do that around the clock there's no impact left after a period of time. While I knew that Johnson's intense interest in a program, obvious- lei, was motivating him and that there was no time day or night he wasn't prepared to charge in, I think his readiness to participate created a different kind of responsibility for me. And I tried with some degree of success--

G: Did you succeed in this way?

O: Yes--

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G: You were saying that there were times when you would even ask him if the President wanted you to make a call. Is that right, or he would ask you if he--?

O: No, he would ask me if I wanted him to make some calls. I had to fight it a little bit because of his intense interest in the progress of the legislation.

G: Was he more inclined to make calls that you didn't know about than President Kennedy would have been?

O: He might have, although I must say that, to my knowledge at least, I don't know what personal or old friendship calls he might make from time to time, but calls that were aimed to the process, to vote-getting and the rest, he would talk to me about them first. He recognized this, and we had candid discussions. I'd say, "Mr. President, you just can't do this. There are twenty-two more we're working on, and we haven't exhausted this yet, and I don't want you [to] because it just isn't right, and I'd argue with him about it. And he'd say, "Well, okay, but let me know now. Don't let it go by if you want me to call, or you want to call those fellows down, okay, I'm ready."

I guess the extent of it was epitomized by my call to him one morning, which I guess I referred to, in the early hours of the morning when I knew he was just awake. I had been up all night, and we had lost a battle in the House. But anyway we lost it in the early hours of the morning in a very tough struggle, and Charlie Halleck had prevailed. And you're depressed and you leave the Hill, it's four or four-thirty in the morning, and you're heading home and then you decide to not go to bed at all. But you owe it to the President to advise him of the negative as well as the positive, and so you wait dutifully till six-thirty, a quarter of seven, whatever it was, and you call the President and advise him. Then President Johnson is saying, "When did this happen?" I said, "It was the early hours of the morning." And he said, "Why didn't you call me? You should have called me and told me about it." Then I'll never forget, he said, "You know, when you're up there bleeding, I want to bleed with you. We have to share these things." I never got over that.

G: Isn't that amazing?

O: Of course, the last thing in the world I would have done is wake him up to tell him. (Laughter) I'm sure it was momentous at the moment, important and significant. It was so important and significant I can't recall the specific incident. But I think it typified the intensity of our effort at all times. He was just great that way, and obviously when a fellow says that to you, your boss, the President of the United States, you're not about to change your practice and say, "Well, now he has told me, 'Why don't you call me at three or four o'clock in the morning and wake me up.'" No, you're not going to do it, but I think it just underscored his personal involvement and his strong support for what you were doing.

G: You were an old friend and ally of President Kennedy long before he assumed the

presidency, and much less so with Lyndon Johnson. Were you as comfortable arguing with LBJ or trying to persuade him to do what you thought ought to be done? Was he as approachable to you in this sense?

O: In a way probably even more so.

G: Why is that?

O: I think the nature of the fellow, his style, his personality. I think, as I keep referring for want of the use of a better word, the husbanding of presidential involvement. On the Kennedy side, I think that it was probably something that President Kennedy never gave any great thought to, that even on the group events and all the efforts we made to ensure communication that I've referred to in the past, I would try to work out a schedule where he would meet for social hours or with an entire group in an important matter. And I would try to schedule those well in advance and put them into his overall schedule. And it would have been a rarity--there were some occasions, but rare occasions--when I would disrupt his schedule and say, "You've just got to move into this now, and calls have to be made, or you have to see Charlie Halleck." Because that incident is one that stays in my mind, on civil rights.

But with President Johnson I would not--let me go back a little bit. I don't recall that at the end of a day, you know, when you get to six, seven o'clock in the evening, or whatever, that President Kennedy was apt to call and say, "Well, I know all this activity has been going on. What's it look like?" With President Johnson, he would similarly know there was a lot of activity going on involving a vital piece of legislation on the Hill. But he'd call and want to know what's going on. And that would generally lead to saying: "Come on in. You've got to come downstairs." I was one flight over the Oval Office. You go down there and you might spend several hours discussing that and a myriad of other things until Mrs. Johnson would keep pleading with the President to go to the living quarters and have a bite to eat.

So I felt very comfortable. I think that I enjoyed him, for one thing. I hadn't known him well, but in very short order I liked his openness. I was not a Johnson fellow. After all, after Dallas, you had two layers of staff for a while, until things melded reasonably well. Now, that didn't affect me at all on the Congressional Relations side, but I think that there were [conflicts]. You know, Ken O'Donnell was the appointments secretary, Jack Valenti was sitting right in the hallway there, and there was Walter Jenkins. The President's feeling in the transition was retain the Kennedy staff, but I also want my own people. I would think that in Ken O'Donnell's role, outside the Oval Office door and with a new president in there, it probably wasn't very workable. While with me, the fellows, the Johnson people, no matter what their assignments were, joined me at his urging in participating in the legislative effort. That applied to every Johnson person in the White House over the years that I was there.

For example, Bob Hardesty became a key fellow. We worked out a system of

trying to load down the ***Congressional Record*** with pro-Great Society comments of all sorts, placing them on the Hill for insertion. Well, that was another dimension. And Bob, who was an extremely able guy who had been at the Post Office Department, was very knowledgeable. Not only was he an excellent writer and very quick in developing statements for the ***Record***--statements that we'd ask members to enter--but he also was good at seeing that they were properly disseminated. And as you know, our old friend [Jake] Jacobsen had a role in the White House which we didn't have in the Kennedy White House. He received delivery of that ***Congressional Record*** in the wee hours of the morning at his home, and had that ***Record*** completely reviewed and duly noted with clips so that the President could take an early-morning look at the results of all these efforts we're making.

Now, you reach that point and then what else is there you can do? There's always something more you can add to this overall effort. But we'd get into head counts in tough times when it appeared close and it was a real drive to bring about success. The President would, for example, look over the head count of the Texas delegation, because he was always interested [in it], and he'd have very forceful and candid comments about everyone, particularly if there was a question mark or a "no" next to the name. (Laughter) Then the next thing you know, Marvin Watson and others would be on the phone calling old Texas buddies. You know, all of this was going on. There was no limit to the effort and no limit to what you might undertake within some degree of reason, to get back to my old phrase, to maximize the effort.

Now, that was the Johnson White House and that was the Great Society program, and consequently, what did I want? I'm a member of the staff in one area of activity and you want presidential support for your efforts? Boy, you had it coming out your ears! (Laughter) You had all you could cope with and more by way of support. There was an army.

G: President Johnson, though, did have a reputation for berating his staff. Was this a tendency that at times made you reluctant to confront him with something that you felt was wrong?

O: Not at all. I guess there will be disbelievers, but I can tell you that in my years associated with Lyndon Johnson I never had anything remotely like a confrontation.

G: Really?

O: Now, having said that, I think people wouldn't believe it. But I would hear he had some heated discussion with Bill Moyers or George Reedy or whomever. Never in my presence. I mean I never was a witness to any of that. And I assume that I heard enough about that sort of thing that such occurrences took place. I can't recall meanness or nastiness expressed by the President.

I must say that because of his personality and his openness--I've always had the

reputation of being rather verbose myself and, Lord knows, Lyndon Johnson had that reputation, so the two of us together, on a matter that could be resolved in five or ten minutes could result in an hour of discussion. But it never posed a problem to me at all.

I can say this: that whatever did not go right regarding the Great Society program and its enactment certainly was not due to any failure on the part of Lyndon Johnson to devote maximum effort to it. I'd have to take that responsibility myself, and there may have been occasions when perhaps I should have said to the President, "Why don't you make these calls?" which he would have done without hesitation. I really had followed the same procedure I did with Kennedy, that you go to the President and insert him into a battle only when every other possibility has been exhausted.

I do remember--it was a discharge petition on District of Columbia home rule--I ran into that buzz saw one night. I was sitting in the outer office, the small office outside the Oval Office, with the President and we were going over this discharge petition. At this point the liberals, the Joe Rauhs and the rest of them, had given up on the Hill. They claimed there was no way you could get the necessary signatures on the discharge petition. Each time you came close, some people would withdraw their names. But I guess I mentioned the twenty-two--I don't know why it sticks in my mind--but there were twenty-two nonsignatories to the discharge petition that had no good reason not to sign. In the conversation with the President, I revealed this to him. We were talking and I had the head count in my pocket and here are these twenty-two. Now, these are twenty-two liberal Democrats. And this could make the difference. Well, I couldn't stop him. He proceeded to pick up the phone and gave the White House telephone operator the names of the twenty-two and chased them all over town. I don't recall he had caught all twenty-two by the time I went home, but he stayed with it. He'd have some conversations with them, I'll tell you. I thought, now we're going to have presidential involvement in this matter when there were probably other occasions when it could have been more significant and I had not [asked him]. But this was inadvertent. But once he saw those twenty-two names and reflected on a few of them, nothing could stop him.

G: What would he say to them on the phone, for example?

O: [He'd] say to them, "Come on, you can't do this. This is ridiculous. Listen, I'm putting you down. I'm sitting here with Larry and we're talking about this and there's no way you can. . . . Is that right, you'll do it tomorrow? Come on now." There would be little or no conversation on the other end; it was always sort of one-sided. He just worked them over and it succeeded. But the fact of the matter is, I thought later, "I don't know. Perhaps I should have picked my spots a little better." (Laughter) As I say, I didn't go to him. There's no way I would have gone to him and said, "Here's twenty-two names. I'm going to sit with you, and let's make twenty-two phone calls." Why, I wouldn't have deigned to do something like that! That's probably as good an example as I can cite of my association with him and the personal effort he would undertake. It was amazing to see it all unfold. And his conversations were figuratively nose to nose. If it was in person it would have been nose to nose, hand on the shoulder and whacking the back. He was

verbalizing the same sort of thing on the telephone, and it was an example of the need to husband his activities. Because if he did that every night of the week, there might have been people on the Hill that didn't want to take his phone call. (Laughter)

G: Let's go again to the question of notification of projects. It's clear from your files that this is something that members of Congress were keenly interested in, having that notification so they could get what you described as that front page story in the Springfield newspaper, something like that. I notice that sometimes even when you did give them advance notice that they might not get the word out before some of their competitors did. Was this a problem?

O: It was a problem at times.

G: And they would blame you, or they would blame your office even though they got the advance notice. They might not react as quickly--

O: Every minute of the day there's something happening somewhere, in some department or agency that can impact on this and be helpful. So you're doing all you can to keep your hands on every aspect of it. These calls became routine. And Claude [Desautels] or somebody in the office would call the member's administrative assistant and say, "Now we'll have the following information--just jot it down A, B, C, D--and your boss can make the announcement. He ought to make it promptly." And not to excuse inadvertency at times, we found that a lot had to do with the reaction of that person in that office. And then a member would learn that some colleague had made some announcement where they had adjoining districts or the mix was such that it involved more than one member of the House and, of course, you'd have the Senate. If you had a Democrat in the Senate, of course, he could be making the announcement on a statewide basis as the member was on a district basis.

When those occasions arose, interestingly enough, it was often due to the inadvertency of the member's office, the failure to recognize the immediacy of it. Sometimes there was a scream from the member. Then the member would recognize that this called for action on his part to ensure that when that call was received, [the announcement was made]. After all, there were days when you might be making fifty calls and you had to spread it out. The person designated on our call list was the one that would get the message, and we'd advise that member, "That call was made at such and such a time"--it was logged--"and the information was provided." And it wasn't unusual for the member to check it out in his own office and find that's where it occurred. Now, there may have been times where there was failure on our part; I'm sure those situations occurred, too. But it was again to the best of your ability. And I would say the overall impact of this procedure far overrode any failures on our part or the member's office to follow through.

G: Some Republicans accused you of more or less being secretive or withholding information from them. This was the charge that they made in this connection.

O: Well, I guess the charge was valid. If withholding meant their office wasn't called, then that was withholding.

G: Okay. Now, another dimension of this, and we talked about it last time, was the matter of patronage. I have a note that Dick Donahue handled a lot of your patronage.

O: Yes.

G: Tell me how this worked.

O: Well, patronage, it took a wide dimension; it might even go to trying to get some clerk in an office promoted. There were many of these little items that might have been somewhat meaningful to the member or probably just a pain to the member that he wanted to get rid of in terms of some constituent pressures on him. It could run to all kinds of--it oftentimes had to do with postmasterships, rural mail carriers, lower-level positions in departments and agencies at the regional level, all over the lot.

Much of it would be a congressman or a senator responding to a constituent by sending you a letter. And you had to make judgments, and Dick Donahue was excellent in this area. If that member sent a letter saying, "I am pleased to recommend John Smith, who is a most deserving constituent of mine, for consideration to be deputy assistant regional something or other in Omaha," Dick could--and that was as a result of conversation between Dick and me--pretty much construe that it wasn't of overriding interest. You would put it into the mix and you'd make an inquiry about it--I'm really talking about an amazing variety of recommendations. [If the check revealed that] it didn't make sense or was unfair to other employees or there'd be jumping a [grade], you wouldn't have any hesitancy to send a letter back or make a phone call, whichever way Dick wanted to do it, and say, this just isn't going to work. And you found that it was only the rare occasion that that member would put up a fight, but he wants something in writing saying that we've seriously considered [it]; there'll probably be another opportunity for John Smith in the future. Then he can send the copy of the letter, and so his constituent got a negative but at least the constituent knew that the member had made a plea for him. You might not think that would be the case, but most of the fellows on the Hill were realists.

Now, if the fellow on the Hill said, "When you get a chance I'd like to have you drop by. I'd like to talk about a constituent of mine that you're just going to be so impressed with." Or which was more often the case, the fellow said, "I want to drop down. Can I set up an appointment and come down and visit you in your office to discuss this?" Then you're dealing with a serious case in terms of the interest of the member. Accordingly you may have to nudge this a little bit. Perhaps, if everything else is equal or close to equal, then it's going to work. However, in much of this our referral would be to the Democratic National Committee. While we retained the active interest in making a determination, we would be quick to say, "This is being referred to John Bailey." If the

decision was negative and it was in an area other than just routine, a notch or two beyond or higher at times, John Bailey would be the one that would have to notify the member that this wasn't doable.

So you're not really sitting with a documented, written check list of procedure. You're making political judgments, always having in mind the retention of friendship, the improvement of friendship and contact. And weighing all of this sort of thing, it's a difficult area. But often you would find that whether John Smith or Joe Brown in a regional office of the Small Business [Administration] or whatever was given this new assignment, it was not significant. Either one could qualify so why not do it for the fellow that the congressman was interested in?

G: Did you ever have a situation where you desperately wanted a guy appointed because that was the formula for, say, getting an important piece of legislation passed? If you could do something for this congressman or senator, you felt like he would be right on an issue and--?

O: No. I'll tell you, however, situations somewhat like that did occur from time to time. If it was clear to us that the appointment should not be made, the qualifications just weren't there, and it was just counterproductive to satisfy the member of Congress, we made that determination up front. We stayed with it. There were any number of times that we would deny the request. That just was part of the procedure. And you would try to do it in the best possible manner. You would always have it reflect some serious considerations, some thought, and you would be candid. You'd say, "Listen, it doesn't add up; the department head"--or whatever it might have been--"says that this man has been interviewed early on for this position [and] has been turned down for the following reasons," or whatever.

If you ever allowed yourself to be lulled into that sort of procedure, it would be counterproductive and the wrong procedure to follow in the best interest of the President. Because invariably, even at somewhat lower levels, this is going to come back to haunt you and you shouldn't do it. It just isn't right to do it, and you just have to bite the bullet. We were biting so many bullets in that area, in patronage, all the time that you were inured to a return call saying, "I can't understand this." Inured to it, you had to be, because with that fellow up there on the Hill in that particular instance the answer is no, it's not going to be done. You're just hopeful that in follow-ups there'll be other areas, patronage or whatever it might be, where he's going to be pleased with your answers and judge you've been fair to him. You're talking about quality in government and competency and if you can't fulfill that to the best of your ability despite pressures, then you have failed. And you couldn't have a Dick Donahue or anyone else sitting there feeling that his job was to put the square peg in the round hole because some guy yelled at him from the Hill. You just couldn't do it.

G: Did you ever want to effect an appointment and have John Bailey or the Democratic National Committee say no, that--?

O: No, they weren't in a position to say no.

G: Is that right?

O: And that's no reflection on John Bailey. That was an area I had a great sensitivity to because, coming from political organization, I felt that the role of the Democratic National Committee should be enhanced, we should be supportive. I'll have to say that just wasn't the case. I think unfairly in the Kennedy period, and I'm trying to recall the Johnson period, the Democratic National Committee was cast in the role that the party entity seems to have been in historically. When you are the chairman and your party is in the White House, there's a world of difference. I was chairman of the Democratic National Committee when the party was out of office, and there's a role that you can develop in terms of being a spokesman on the attack of the incumbent administration. Obviously, there's no patronage involved if you're out of office, and you can perform that role. It's a role somewhat like the current role of Paul Kirk--trying to always seek harmony and develop programs as an out party. But once the party is in, [that role changes], and I've never quite understood that. I remember at that time at the early stages I was trying to make an effort--I don't suggest it was a very vigorous one--to be sure there was a continuing recognition on the part of the staff of the existence of the national committee and the need to have it a viable, functioning entity.

But as time went on, you just sort of forgot the national committee was there. The national committee became a vehicle when we needed to cover something of a negative nature that John could take the rap for, or when we would feel that conceivably the national committee could have some impact, for example, in developing party interest and support out in the field for the legislative program. I think the committee was in a position to be helpful in that area, and I also candidly admit that we never utilized it as we should have.

G: Let's talk about some specific kinds of appointments: ambassadorships; was this a part of the patronage process as well?

O: Yes.

G: Tell me what the criteria would be here.

O: What you tried to do was to achieve a degree of balance between career appointees and non-career appointees. It's part of the attitude in the White House, and I don't know whether this had been the attitude of other administrations. If you had a fellow who had played a significant role in your campaign, he probably had a resume that would reflect a considerable degree of success in the private sector. Secondly, the fellow was expressing keen interest in being recognized, perhaps a direct request to be considered for an ambassadorship. Yes, the answer is that there were a number of political appointments to ambassadorships, reflecting the President's appreciation for efforts expended on his behalf.

G: Well, what if the--?

O: On the career levels, there was resentment. If you're a career foreign service officer and your ultimate ambition is to reach the ambassadorial level and you find that your opportunities are cut by 50 or 60 per cent by virtue of political appointments at the ambassadorial level, you don't appreciate the process. By the same token, those in the White House haven't any great concern about your lack of appreciation. So how much are you willing to take by way of adverse criticism generated by the career people or generated by the academicians and the rest that frown upon this process? You can take a good deal to fulfill what you think is your role in the appointment process.

G: What was President Kennedy's view of this dilemma here?His own father had been an ambassador, and I dare say a political appointee.

O: Yes. I think anyone that is not career is political, and whether it's because he was a heavy donor or whether he has great connections in the private sector, whatever it is, it's political. And there are only two designations: either career or political, and I don't think there's an in-between designation.

I don't know as I ever had a conversation with President Kennedy as to his views in this area. You have in a secretary of state an understanding fellow; you'd better have an understanding fellow or he shouldn't be secretary of state. I don't envision it reaching the point in the foreseeable future where that level of appointment is based solely on career service. If you had no patronage at all, you'd be better off, let's start with that. And I think very frankly that any president would say, "I don't want to be bothered. I don't want to hear from anyone that has a personal interest in being ambassador or people advocating his or her appointment as ambassador, because that's a burden I don't want to carry." The fact of the matter is that the two presidents I knew were not that persuaded that the foreign service produces the quality and competency at the ambassador level that it thinks it does.

So it goes beyond patronage. After all, the president can appoint anybody he darn pleases, subject to confirmation, and ignore the foreign service entirely. I think presidents have wanted to maintain some balance to have in some of the sensitive, key ambassador spots people that share his view on foreign policy [who are] not bogged down in the bureaucratic aspects of things. Now, there are small country ambassadorships that oftentimes are purely political, where you weigh it and say, "Now, there are no great conflicts that exist or will occur and this fellow wants to be an ambassador." I hate to even name a country, but some way-out place where he's never going to be heard from again until he sends in his resignation.

To summarize, any president would prefer that there is no such thing as patronage. It's an overall pain in the neck; it may have an occasional plus factor but there's a lot of negative in it. You've got to remember the old saying in politics: every time you make an

appointment, you've made one ingrate and created at least ten enemies. But it's there, it's part of the process. I think when it comes to the State Department, a president doesn't necessarily look at it that way. He is just not, and I think rightly so, that comfortable with the bureaucracy of the State Department that he's inherited. He's just not that sure the State Department is going to reflect his policies. It's the old story: presidents come and go, and I'm still here. When I advocated the removal of the Post Office Department from cabinet status, I realized, as a politician, all these thousands--

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G: --I think [?] that was all for the good.

O: You might say, "Look at this list of openings where we can assign our friends and supporters to positions." I have never felt there was a plus factor in patronage. It's a way of political life. It's there. Somebody has to designate people to hundreds of positions at the third or fourth level. That has to be done, but as to the political benefit derived from it, I think it's minuscule.

If you look at it coldly, I think a member of Congress would be reasonably willing to just forego all of this. I know that when I made the recommendations regarding the Post Office Department, surprisingly there was very little adverse reaction on the Hill on the grounds of patronage. I don't recall any great uproar in that regard, because I think most of those members feel as I do, "If I could only get rid of all of that nonsense." How in God's name do you ever name a postmaster in Yanktown, Ohio, without creating a bunch of enemies? Then the animosity extends to their relatives and friends and you gain nothing. It's something that you were kind of forced into and you have to do, and so one guy thinks you're a hero. You say for just the exercise of some kind of power, look at the price you paid. And it isn't worth it.

G: Yes. Well, now, on the matter of ambassadorships, did members of Congress exert influence or pressure to have friends or supporters of theirs named to ambassadorial posts?

O: I don't recall specifically. At least I wasn't involved. There might have been instances of that. Actually when it comes to ambassadorships, if there's a presidential preference I think there's a widespread recognition that this is the president's patronage.

G: Yes.

O: Subject to confirmation. You might get into a ruckus somewhere, and I'm sure there were occasions when the president couldn't care less who the ambassador was; he had nobody particularly in mind. I'm sure there must have been some senators that had people in mind and hoped they would be considered by the President. This is a presidential appointment in the real sense. You have a right to object to it in confirmation.

G: You sound like it was a fairly isolated case.

O: Yes. Now, you know Matt McCloskey was appointed by President Kennedy as ambassador to Ireland. Matt McCloskey was treasurer of the Democratic National Committee. He was an extremely successful contractor, had developed a major construction business in Pennsylvania. He was a dedicated Democrat. He was a significant fund raiser. He was a thoroughly decent, honorable fellow that deserved recognition for the services he had rendered and the efforts he had expended in behalf of the election of President Kennedy. And Matt McCloskey was of Irish heritage; that was incidental, but it sort of fit. How do you recognize your indebtedness and responsibility to Matt McCloskey? Matt isn't at your doorstep demanding anything, that wasn't his nature. But it was pleasing to suggest to Matt that he might enjoy being ambassador to Ireland for a period of time, and Matt reacted very favorably to it and went to Ireland, and incidentally was loved over there.

But there you are. So that's patronage? Should some foreign service officer have gone to Ireland? Ireland is an ambassadorship, incidentally, that's widely sought for obvious reasons. One, it's a friendly country. Two, it's a country that does not request anything of the United States. Three, it has to be one of the finest embassies in the world. It's just a very pleasant place to be, with people that love America and Americans. Controversy and problems are almost nonexistent. It can be an enjoyable experience. So that was the story of Matt McCloskey.

Now, some fellow might be designated ambassador to a newly-emerged Third World country with a population of a million, two hundred thousand people in desperate poverty. And you could have a fellow who is anxious to be an ambassador and has credentials. He might wind up there, because if he wants to be an ambassador that's where you feel you could comfortably and safely place him without being concerned.

So what you get to is, do you sit there with a formula: X per cent will be career, X per cent will be political? No, I don't think so, but I think in the general weighing of this over a period of time, it has a degree of balance, never the way it should be in terms of the foreign service or on the political side, because suspicion of the State Department is rather strong in the political world, as you know. It's shared widely, fairly or unfairly. That is one department that the people who have political backgrounds have looked at with a jaundiced eye. That may not exist to that degree today. What I remember are members of Congress in key positions on the foreign policy side in their committees--I can think of John Rooney--who felt they were striped pants cookie pushers. And that's what you've got and really you're antagonistic to them. You exercise your power, because you just don't buy them, and that's unfortunate as the devil.

So when you talk about patronage affecting ambassadors, you're saying, "Wait a minute. I'm not going to be overly concerned about some career guy whose nose is out of joint, or some of the third or fourth level State Department people who were there long before I got here and will be there after I've left. They can talk to some of these

columnists and try to stir the pot, but I'm not going to buy it."

G: If there were a really sought-after post like this Irish ambassadorship, would you get involved and help analyze or distill the competition, say if you have two or three people in the running for this job, and help make a decision on which one would be the most suitable?

O: No, not really. My experience with that was Matt, but we had others over there. I could have injected myself into that sort of thing, but I really didn't. I remember a fellow calling me after Jimmy Carter was elected saying he wanted to be ambassador to Ireland and would I contact Jimmy Carter in his behalf. It was clear to me I didn't have that kind of relationship with Jimmy Carter. I was in the sports world at that point. This fellow was making a valiant effort to secure this post. If he were calling me, he must have been calling every living Democrat. And I don't recall who it was, but I do recall he wasn't named.

But I think, in dwelling on Ireland, I'm talking about something that's unique, it's different than some of the others. I didn't sit with the President to urge the appointment of an ambassador or urge that a candidate not be appointed. Now, obviously I have gotten requests and I relayed them, but I did not insert myself into the ultimate decision-making process. I just didn't bother.

But I do recall, though, President Kennedy naming an ambassador to Vietnam. He was trying to determine what to do with Vietnam and he came up with a brilliant idea: why not call in Henry Cabot Lodge, who he had defeated for the Senate, who was a Republican and a nationally-known figure, and see if he could convince him to go to Vietnam? He figured that would be helpful, having a widely-known Republican as ambassador to Vietnam. He's having these problems with Vietnam, and [it would] give it some political balance. Get him in, and it's taking a little gall on my part to even suggest it to him--I'm paraphrasing. The feeling among us is that Cabot would certainly not accept it, and I remember the President's reaction after he met with Cabot and he did accept. He was absolutely amazed that he would accept it.

G: But it was your idea to--?

O: No.

G: Oh, it wasn't? Whose idea was it?

O: I don't know. I assume it was the President's idea. But the reason that I recalled it was that Lodge went to Vietnam and shortly thereafter I received a call from Dean Rusk and Averell Harriman to tell me that Cabot had been in contact with them and wanted them to urge the President to send me to Vietnam to assist him in organizing the situation. Thank goodness they were friends of mine, and we agreed the message was not going to be relayed to the President because he might think about it for a minute! (Laughter) So that

was as close as I came to foreign service.

(Interruption)

G: We were talking about ambassadorships and diplomatic patronage and there was a case that you did assist in with a Mr. [Salvatore] Bontempo, is that right? Bontempo, B-O-N-T-E-M-P-O.

O: I recall the name, yes.

G: This was a more minor position, but it was something that was apparently important to the Italian-American members of Congress. I think it was a deputy assistant secretary for something, and you--

O: Yes, I do recall that.

G: --did advance that appointment.

O: The background of that was that the Italian-American members on the Hill on a number of occasions had expressed their concern about, as they saw it, lack of recognition of Italian-Americans in important levels of the administration. And Bontempo was a name put forward by, I think, Pete Rodino and some of the others up there. That would be an Italo-American appointment. And I did react to their interest directly to the President, and this was worked out and he was designated. That really was not reacting to the thrust of the complaint. It was a rather localized appointment. It certainly did not impact on establishing a record of recognition. You have to label that as not so much an Italo-American appointment as an appointment that resulted from intense lobbying on the part of Pete Rodino and probably some others that were Italian-Americans, but that was about the extent of it.

But this continued to be a problem. Not that we were reluctant at all to react to it. It was the old story: to find an appropriate appointee for an appropriate position. A fellow who had achieved some significant recognition was Tony Celebrezze who was mayor of Cleveland. Tony had become well known around the country and, certainly as we saw it, well known in Italian-American circles. The opportunity did finally present itself and my recollection was that it was secretary of HEW. And we, feeling that the record was going to show definitively that we had recognized the Italian-American in a significant way, carefully structured the appointment of Tony Celebrezze.

To maximize this appointment and its impact on the Italian-American community, we should make sure that selectively we made confidential phone calls in advance to some of our friends, staunch supporters, to advise them of this. I believe it was probably Pete--obviously Pete Rodino would have been one of the [supporters]; he probably would have been first and foremost in terms of these phone calls. I talked to Pete, advised him of this upcoming appointment, which would be announced within a day or hours, asking that the

call be kept confidential. And I was somewhat taken aback because Pete's--and this was also stated by others--reaction was "Tony is a fine fellow, but he's not really well known; he's not a national figure. He isn't really well known in the Italian-American community nationally." Well, talk about puncturing the balloon. Perhaps they felt "We're not going to succumb to this single appointment to the cabinet. We want to come back for more." That would be totally understandable. But, fortunately, when the appointment was announced and he took over, it was widely recognized in the Italian-American community.

But I think our congressional friends just were not that impressed and I really anticipated this was going to be one of the most pleasant calls or series of calls I'd ever make, because there would be widespread approbation and I could even envision wild enthusiasm. But that wasn't the case. It sort of fell a little bit flat. But it wasn't the wrong thing to do by any means; Tony was a very able fellow and acquitted himself well in his post. So forgetting the ethnic aspect of it, it worked out well in any event. But it didn't get the job done. I think you had to have a sense of humor at that point and say, "Well, gosh, we sat around here really thinking we came up with a blockbuster and it turned out that it wasn't accepted as such."

But there again, that's not an ambassadorial appointment. But what goes into the equation? We've been concentrating on appointments as ambassadors. We want to have our administration representative of our supporters and the party as a whole. And those in the Democratic Party are ethnic groups, whether it be Polish-Americans, Italian-Americans, German-Americans, various ethnic groups, they're in there, too. So you're not confined in that sort of patronage process to saying, "Well, who are the largest donors to the campaign?" In one instance it might be a fellow that donated significantly to the campaign in terms of money or of effort. Or it might be someone who didn't necessarily play a significant role in the campaign but is representative of a group, and that way we're honoring the group. However, I think if you didn't have to be engaged in this at all, everybody would be better off and you could go about your business and not be making the enemies that you do make in the appointment process.

G: Were appointments ever made to remove someone from the position that they were currently in? Let's say, if you had a member of Congress or someone who was a problem where he was, did you ever, say, offer him a judgeship or ambassadorship or something like that in order to get him out of the way?

O: I don't recall a specific instance, but if there was an opportunity to do that, you would, and maybe we did.

The name eludes me at the moment, but we had a fellow in Louisiana who had played a key role in the election process. There was a threat--and you take all threats seriously--that there would be a problem in terms of finalizing the electoral college vote of the state of Louisiana. I was at Palm Beach with the President-elect when we had this called to our attention. Someone in that delegation had decided to try to have some of the electors avoid voting for Kennedy and create some disruption, and that might cause some

kind of legal fallout. We certainly didn't need that sort of thing. This fellow played a key role first in notifying us of the existence of this and then in resolving the situation so this didn't take place. In addition, he also had been a staunch Kennedy supporter from the early days in Louisiana, and that wasn't easy to be.

But the aftermath was this man was named head of the civil defense. He took on his duties and he had some ideas on civil defense that there was nothing basically wrong with except that we couldn't supplement his ideas financially. This sort of drifted on, and then one day this fellow was discussing with me again some of his ideas for fallout shelters. He contemplated visiting the Pope to discuss the utilization of churches in the United States as potential fallout shelters. This was getting a little bit beyond us. He was well motivated and all the rest and he rightly felt we weren't paying enough attention. And I guess it would be hard to quarrel with that. He became disenchanted with his role, and we became somewhat concerned about the scope of the role he had undertaken. The net result of it all was he left that post and became a federal judge and, as far as I know, may still be sitting.

So patronage can take all kinds of forms, but I don't recall saying, "Let's pull out from the group this individual in the Congress that is in a key position who is very troublesome and let's give him the high honor of promoting him to the judiciary or to an ambassadorial post, because then that will either create an opening that can be better filled or eliminate a problem."

G: Did you ever consider an ambassador to the Vatican while President Kennedy was president?

O: I don't recall any consideration. I not only have no recollection of that, but I would assume that that was not in our thoughts. I would also assume it was not in the presidential thought process either. If you reflect on our difficulties in education legislation on the private school issue and the sensitivity to it in the White House, I can't believe that anybody was sitting around talking about the Vatican.

G: This was an issue you didn't need. (Laughter)

O: There's an issue I don't think we would have touched with a hundred-foot pole under the circumstances.

G: Okay, now let me ask you about patronage from a negative standpoint. Did you ever get pressure from members of Congress to try to get you to remove someone who was giving them problems in their district or someone that they found obnoxious? An enemy, a political enemy, in an important position either in their state or in their district that was causing them problems?

O: Well, I don't recall anything like that at the national level. So going to the state and district [level], something tells me that situations like this probably did occur. In the

normal evolvement of transition, you've tried to focus on the national level--departments, agencies, Washington-based, at the top and down three or four levels in these departments and agencies--and you haven't succeeded in completing that task, you [will] have holdovers at various regional and state levels of the federal bureaucracy that you haven't gotten to. In fact, [you] probably don't even know [they] exist.

So, again, I am sure that there were situations of that nature where we were reminded by members of Congress that certain people were in place for a year or longer after we had taken office that should have been replaced. And you would act accordingly to replace these people. But the reason for the existence of that situation was just the enormity of the whole thing. But, yes, a congressman or senator would be very sensitive to that, because he or his staff, who had dealt with these people over a period of time, had found that they had no cooperation. And then to see that person still in that regional office in the bureaucracy at a level where the person could be removed and replaced, there would be cause, in political terms, for complaint. At the national level I don't have any recollection of senators or congressmen charging into the White House saying, "You've got to get rid of so-and-so, he's causing us great difficulty."

But when you get to a lower level of the bureaucracy, where the appointment process still exists on a regional or local level, clearly when that was called to our attention we took action to replace that person with a, if you will, friendly person. But that would be something called to our attention and I'll tell you, with the limitation of two terms for the presidency, those people called to our attention would probably have remained in place throughout the terms of both President Kennedy and Johnson. As I've indicated earlier, we found it downright impossible to clean house across the board at the levels we had envisioned.

Now, I think later administrations would probably have attacked that problem more efficiently than we did. By the end of the first year the effort we had undertaken, including filling existing openings, had not succeeded because we were unable to come up with qualified persons. It drifted away from us. We went into that second year saying, "I just can't devote any more time to that." It just disappeared and those people continued in place in many instances. If you couldn't fill obvious openings at the third or fourth level and you left those openings there month after month, clearly you couldn't get to removing people that should have been removed.

G: You've mentioned earlier, I think, working at a government salary, and apparently salary was a consideration because Robert Kennedy in 1961 introduced legislation to raise the allowable salary for some attorneys in the Justice Department. Do you recall that legislation and--?

O: Yes, vaguely. My recollection has been aided by a memo that I've seen recently. Bobby's motivation in trying to adjust salaries of lawyers in the Justice Department is something that I didn't quarrel with. But the reality of it should have been pretty obvious at the outset. There are hundreds and perhaps thousands of lawyers in government, and I found

that when I became postmaster general there were some twenty-five or thirty full-time lawyers on the staff of the postmaster general, which I didn't realize until I arrived there. So to single out Justice Department lawyers and to try to adjust their salary just opened a Pandora's box.

G: Yes. You indicated, too, in the memorandum that there were some jurisdictional problems in this issue in terms of what committee it would go to, I gather, and the Civil Service.

O: Yes, that existed, too, but the whole idea. If I'm a lawyer over in the State Department or in Commerce or wherever and I see this effort to adjust the salaries and levels of the lawyers in Justice--lawyers in other departments are doing legal work, too--how do you justify something like that without it affecting the whole executive branch?And I assume if I'm an accountant, then I couldn't understand why lawyers should be singled out either. At a minimum, it's going to cause a great deal of rancor. As to the jurisdictional aspects, I don't recall specifically, but there were problems in that area, too.

G: Do you recall the civil rights aspect to this, too, with the time of the Freedom Rides and--?

O: Well, that was a part of it, too. There were people on the Hill that felt that you wanted to upgrade a bunch of folks that were busily engaged in monitoring their districts, as they saw it; that, of course, was very sensitive. And in reality, of course, there was a great thrust on the part of the department under Bobby, great emphasis placed in this area. And a great number of lawyers were engaged, and there was a flow of them all through the South. I suppose if you're sitting there and you're a conservative Democrat from the South and you've had a lot of comment from constituents regarding this activity, you're resentful. Then to compound it all, it is suggested that we ought to upgrade these fellows. I think reality eluded some people at that time. Taking a particular group of lawyers and upgrading them in terms of salaries would be disturbing to some members of Congress and many government attorneys. I don't know how you would expect to get widespread approbation.

Tape 2 of 4, Side 2

G: [Did you] talk with the Attorney General about these problems?

O: I don't recall specifically. Certainly some of the fellows on my staff and Nick Katzenbach or others over at the Justice Department must have discussed it. Because while it wasn't one of the primary legislative items on our agenda, clearly the problems that it was causing and the reactions that were emanating from the Hill would indicate there had to be some discussions of it. I don't recall them specifically.

G: What tack would you take when you were having to deal with some of the conservative southerners about these issues?

O: I think we never had any hesitancy to--there was never a thought that we not move vigorously to pursue equality and justice. That was a given.

G: Even the southerners accepted this?

O: No, not necessarily. They knew that we were engaged; they knew the position of the President and his brother, the Attorney General. He's a vigorous attorney general and hard-hitting.

G: Well, yes, but--

O: That afforded an opportunity to complain about--

G: To err the other way. But you were the point man for the administration in that you were the one on the Hill, and when someone let's say like Jim Eastland or Jamie Whitten or someone would complain to you about working with the Freedom Riders or something like that, how would you respond to them? How did you handle the touchy issue of civil rights?

O: Well, the fact of the matter is that it wasn't that touchy in that sense, because the Jamie Whittens and the rest of them at that stage, I'm not suggesting that they accepted all this or they were at all pleased. It was politically troublesome to them and all the rest, but it was within the framework of existing law and procedure and was the responsibility of the administration. Go back to that period--you're talking about 1962. The whole battle between southern Democrats and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party was ongoing, but there wasn't yet any meaningful civil rights legislation.

You would sit there and say, "This is going on, but there's a limit to how much they can do or how they can do it, and they'll be fought every step of the way. We're not yet engaged in a major civil rights struggle in the Congress." That came later. Let's face it, the Democratic Party claimed to be a national entity, but party platforms were but a piece of paper. If you're a southern Democrat, you made your views known regarding the platform of the party. But all of that had not caused the ultimate disruption. The Democratic Party got away with that for a long time. They could have the semblance of liberalism, pro-civil rights and all the rest, the commitment, the pledges, the platforms, the enunciations on the part of northern leaders and liberal leaders. But the reality was it hadn't resulted in any meaningful action.

So the stymying was effective and continued to be effective, and it resulted in a big brawl before it finally was brought about. So you had defections in the South, but the fact of the matter was in 1960 Jack Kennedy was an advocate of civil rights, meaningful civil rights. That was one of the commitments he made, and in addition to that he was a Catholic. And with all of that, he carried six southern states.

G: Yes.

O: You have to remember that at the time we went into the White House in January of 1961, there was a long record of southern Democrat-Republican coalition opposition to national Democratic policies. By that, I mean policies enunciated by the Democratic Party as a national entity. And that was an accommodation the coalition had reached and it was very effective, and they had, in addition to civil rights, stymied the progressive legislation in many areas and had done it very effectively. When we arrived, having won the presidency by a paper-thin margin after eight years of Eisenhower, that coalition was very much in place. We found that out in a hurry in the Rules [Committee] fight. And it took a lot of doing, over a period of time, before that opposition began to erode.

G: While we're on the matter of civil rights in this early period of the Kennedy Administration, the 1961 period, was there a policy that cabinet members and others in the administration would not appear at segregated functions around the country?

O: It was well understood.

G: Really?

O: No.

G: You felt free to--?

O: No, I don't think we ever approached that in those terms at all.

G: Because I saw a memo in your files to indicate that someone--I don't think he was a cabinet member, but he was perhaps someone who was high up in the administration--[was] wondering whether a function he was going to attend in Louisiana was integrated or whether it was segregated, because there seemed to be some question about. . . .

O: I don't recall that, but I think it might have been in another context. I don't know. Perhaps he might have been tentatively scheduled to attend a function that was segregated. I say that only because I so vividly recall our problems in Louisiana, the northern vs. southern of Louisiana. It was awfully tough territory for us in the presidential election. And the degree of opposition to Kennedy in northern Louisiana probably was not surpassed anywhere else in the South.

G: Really?

O: Perhaps. I'm saying that because of my personal recollections, because I remember being in northern Louisiana as part of our campaign effort and finding that it was very clear that the animosity toward Kennedy was wide- spread. Not that anybody tried to hit me over the head, but it was obvious and affected those who deigned to support us. Our hope in Louisiana was that in New Orleans and the South, we'd be able to overcome what was significant opposition to Kennedy. So if we're talking about a possible visit to Louisiana

[by] somebody in the administration, it might have been by a member of Congress to address an audience that might have been a segregated group. That would be a sensitive area to have one of our people appearing before a redneck group. It should not have happened, if it did, but I don't recall it.

G: Back to the story of campaigning in north Louisiana, was the opposition an anti-Catholic opposition, do you think?

O: Yes.

G: Was that the key issue?

O: Yes, very much so.

G: Well, why did they support you anyway, or at least the state--?

O: The state did.

G: The state did, but why did--you even had people there who were willing to support the ticket but not--

O: Yes. Well, there were some. And again there was a meeting as part of our travels. I recall being present. I recall that the meeting was not particularly impressive. I recall that I spent little time there following the meeting. There wasn't anybody that suggested that I didn't have a right to be in northern Louisiana. But it was clear to us that we had a coterie of staunch supporters that were really putting it on the line by even acknowledging publicly they were supporting Kennedy in that particular area. And that was reflected, as I recall, too, in the Rules fight. [There was] a congressman from that area that was really berated by the press and had a cross burned on his lawn over his support of us in the Rules fight. So that was the intensity of it. It was strange to be in the same state and travel through the rice country and through New Orleans and have the enthusiasm and great crowds when Kennedy was there, or going back organizationally and having great meetings. It was as though you were in a separate state. But that was the situation there.

G: I had one more question about patronage, and that regards a note that the patronage in New York City was done through the Mayor's office. Mayor [Robert] Wagner had a role in that, and Congressman [Leonard] Farbstein was very upset that the Mayor was controlling, or at least influencing--having a role in the patronage process.

O: Yes, well--

G: How did it work in New York?

O: Well, the Mayor had a role in it, that's my recollection. And the Mayor was very supportive. More than that, however, the party organization in the state of New York and

in New York City was not, other than [in] isolated areas of northern New York--Buffalo is a good example--very effective. In many parts of the country the organization was in a state of disarray. That was not confined to the city of New York. To have some kind of organizational support, a mayor of New York is by virtue of his office in a strong position. He can put resources into a campaign effort. And if the city Democratic committee of New York is not strong, I think there's a tendency to move toward party leaders who are not dependent on party organization but have their own capabilities. And as I recall Bob Wagner, that would be the case.

There's another aspect of that, too. On patronage, again--I reflect back to my home district to make the comparison--if Congressman Boland up in the Second District of Massachusetts had patronage of whatever degree in those various federal entities that might be located in his district, that was a very simple procedure and you were dealing with Eddie Boland. You might get a little touch of a Democratic senator. But you deal in New York [City] on any level of patronage and you don't--these congressional districts are all melded. No congressman in New York had anything more going for him than whatever seniority he had in the House, certainly at the local level. It is my recollection there were probably fifteen members of Congress in the city of New York, and there's one mayor. And the mayor is pre-eminent in terms of local politics. The congressmen, in several instances through the party structure in New York, the borough structure and all the rest, are designated like Cook County. And the mayors had an input into the designation. It would have been very natural, without recalling the specifics, for Bob Wagner to have input on patronage in New York. And the criticism of a particular congressman probably didn't impact greatly on us, because the political reality is obvious. We had six, probably, congressmen in New York that had seniority in the House that made them important in terms of the Congress. But there's little meaningful patronage involved that didn't cross congressional lines there and you didn't have a strong-man congressman saying, "Hey, you can't come into New York," or "You can't make a determination on appointments without me, and I insist that I make the appointments." You're very apt to look to a friendly mayor.

G: Were New York City and Chicago fairly typical then of the mayors' involvement in the--?

O: No, not really, because [Richard] Daley had both: he had control of the city in the elective office of mayor, and he had control of the city in the organizational office of chairman of the Cook County Democratic Committee. And he handled both jobs simultaneously. He spent time in the mayor's office and time in his office in the Cook County Democratic Committee headquarters.

The only comparable organizational situation to Cook County would have been in Philadelphia with Bill Green who, as a congressman, really controlled the congressional delegation, controlled the activities of the city, and worked in close harmony with David Lawrence, who at that time was governor of Pennsylvania. I think, including Cook County, Philadelphia was the most effective Democratic Party organization in the country. It was the first organization, to my knowledge, that had everything on computers, that

registered voters three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and had a million or two million dollar-budget for the operation of the city committee. I remember going to a meeting at Bill Green's request during our campaign and finding at that meeting that there were people at the door at desks and everybody attending had to check in, and that included every judge in Philadelphia, to be sure that his or her attendance was duly noted so that Bill Green would know who was present. There was nothing like that in New York. There was Joe Crangle and his predecessor up there in Erie County, Buffalo, and the Mayor of Albany who were extremely well organized and I must say well controlled and local patronage was fully utilized--not federal patronage, local patronage--to maintain an organization. But in the city of New York it was rather an amorphous situation, so if there was anybody in New York that could call shots it would be the Democratic mayor.

G: But did you rely on the mayors quite often for this purpose? Were they--?

O: I think when there were potential appointments coming up or openings of some degree of significance that would be based in New York that it would be very probable that--I don't think we would rely on the mayor or the mayor would have the final and only say. But certainly we would encourage the mayor's input and give it serious consideration.

G: Now, I have another note on patronage that indicates that you avoided judicial appointments, that you yourself did not get involved in that. Is that accurate?

O: That's right. Yes.

G: Did you nonetheless have this pressed upon you by members of Congress?

O: Yes, there were occasions, and I'd simply relay their requests or suggestions. I had no direct involvement, nor did I want any. Now, that was something that I did not envision as part of my activities and that I was far better off having it well understood on the Hill that I didn't have any significant input in these areas.

G: If ambassadors were not considered congressional patronage, judgeships were--

O: Yes.

G: --I suppose to a large extent. They really did take an active role in--

O: Well, sure, because of the tradition that you have a senator up there that would either put that slip in the slot or take the slip out of the slot. And you could have one of your appointees spend a long time in purgatory before he'd ever serve on the bench. So there was some give and take in that area, obviously, but that was not incorporated in the day-to-day patronage activities or an area that we might be engaged in Congressional Relations.

G: It's amazing that you could keep out of that area. . . .

O: Well, I think that it was understood. See, in both of those areas you did have the element of Senate confirmation and that makes a difference. Patronage beyond Senate confirmation is one thing, but when it entails Senate confirmation, then again you're going to make ten enemies to every one [friend]. I think the less it's related to Congressional Relations the better off everyone is on our end, or was. And it wasn't planned that way, it just evolved that way.

G: And did it remain this way under Lyndon Johnson?

O: Yes, as far as any involvement on my part was concerned, yes.

G: Was it handled primarily through the Justice Department, is that the--?

O: In the Kennedy period, the major input was Justice, yes.

G: Did it vary under Johnson?

O: I don't know. I say Kennedy period because Bobby obviously took an active interest in this whole area. Under Johnson, I'm not even sure how it evolved.

G: Let's move on to public works as another, I guess, example of the carrot, and the carrot and stick ***Time*** magazine cover. How did you use public works as part of your--?

O: Not nearly to the degree that people would envision, because we well understood that, overridingly, public works was an element of congressional maneuvering.We had limited say. That reminded me of a conversation that the President had with Congressman Al Thomas, and I think that pretty much summed it up. It was very pleasant and really in a humorous vein, but nevertheless accurately described the situation. The President pointed out to Al, in his key role in the House in Appropriations, and Mike Kirwan, in his key role in Public Works, he would hope that people like Al and those at a similar level with similar power in the House would keep him in mind because he came from Massachusetts and he'd like to think that Massachusetts would get a fair shake now and then in terms of projects or what have you that could be designated to a state. He would hope that Al and his associates would look upon him kindly and remember he came from Massachusetts, and they might from time to time just give him a little bit of the crust of that pie.

You had probably ways of stalling implementation and you probably could find ways through failure to utilize funding that sort of after the fact could have some impact. But as far as the initiation of projects, in fact the congressional provision for funding projects, the whole story of public works and analogous items up there, we had limited impact. I think people didn't see it that way, and I read article after article about the heavy hand in the White House, the rubber stamp in the Johnson period, the rubber stamp situation in the Congress, and this was all supposedly due to some great power of the presidency that impacted directly on all these members, and that they just had to sit and

worry and nervously play these things out because they'd have to fear that the President would come right down on their head. In the real world that wasn't the case.

So when you're talking about the carrot and the stick, I'd heavily weight it to the carrot. I think that that was the way we approached it, because if you're a colleague and I'm taking care of you, you're taking care of me, and the next one's taking care of both of us, and it's all within the confines of the congressional process. It's pretty darn hard to be sitting down at the other end of the Avenue in the White House and suggesting that a particular project not be approved or that it not be funded. And all you have by way of a tool is you can do some things in the White House after the fact that would cause a member of Congress to finally wake up to the fact that you weren't overly happy with him.

But that bore on the delaying aspects of it and other related areas. But I think, to sum it up, what should be understood by students and observers, particularly those that report much of this, I always separate out the viewers and the doers. I always did. I guess because the viewers used to disturb at times, because they had simplistic answers as to how government should function. They, also, to a great extent, had a misconception of the power of the presidency in terms of wheeling and dealing with the Congress. I always felt many of them never understood that a great deal of the motivation had to do with the substance of the legislative proposals and the innate good of the proposal in terms of its impact on our fellow Americans, and that part of that equation was the attitude of the Congress, individually and collectively, toward the president of the United States who was the advocate. They were finally the people that would dispose. So there was a stick of sorts, but not nearly as large and as heavily weighted as I think most of observers construe it to be.

G: Was there a noticeable difference under Johnson as against Kennedy? Did Johnson tend to rely on the stick more than Kennedy had?

O: I don't know. I don't think he had any more going for him with the stick. The stick was the same stick. Maybe he utilized it a little differently, I don't know. What is the stick? I've said this before, but I think it's a prime example of the weight of that stick and the effect and impact of it. And you go about closing VA hospitals and you proceed in such a way that the Majority Leader of the United States Senate is not advised in advance that a hospital in his state is on the list of the sixteen, seventeen, or whatever it was hospitals that were to be closed because they were archaic or under-used. Good, solid reason to close them. And the President of the United States and the Majority Leader of the Senate are in conflict immediately. I'm not suggesting that Mike Mansfield would have accepted that decision if he had been notified in advance, but the fact that he had no notification at all, and to proceed, as he saw it, arrogantly and arbitrarily to announce the closing of a hospital and leave him in the totally embarrassing position of being a senator and majority leader and not knowing it, incurred his enmity no end for a period of time.

Well, it also got the President's back up, and the President made up his mind that those hospitals were going to be closed come hell or high water, and he devoted an

inordinate amount of time and effort to bring that about and failed. And I think it's an example of presidential power in terms of the stick. Sure, if somebody on that Hill is causing you problems, and by gosh you're just sick of it, and that obviously happened on any number of occasions, the opportunity might present itself. And what form could it take? Maybe that fellow did get around to a very important constituent with a great deal of influence in his district, wanting certain recognition that you could give that fellow on behalf of the congressman if you cared to, and you denied it. Now, that's a stick. But, see, that sort of thing is there. That's probably an example.

But I noticed in going over some notes, some reference to Jennings Randolph and a project being derailed after he had failed to vote in our interest in a very important matter. That occurred, I'm sure, and probably there was some indication that was rather blatant. And maybe if it was blatant at that time, and I don't recall the details, it probably wasn't the--it may have been counterproductive. So it's not that simple. I know that Jennings Randolph incurred our enmity to a great degree at a time. I know that we did everything possible emanating from the state of West Virginia to convince Randolph otherwise in that particular vote, and it failed. We know that it was a significant vote because if Randolph, as we saw it, had voted with us in that instance, the President of the Senate would have been able to cast the deciding vote, because it was that close. And we lost, and when you lose by a very narrow margin you're apt to take it to heart more than you would otherwise, dwell on it more and be more disturbed. I know that Jennings Randolph was not held in high regard in the White House for a period of time, and if that lack of regard because of that vote was reflected by derailing a project that embarrassed him and caused him problems, sort of so be it. But I'm not at all sure that it had a positive impact and probably was more our venting our spleen than being practical people, saying Jennings overall hasn't been that bad a guy and has voted with us more often than not and we haven't any great problem with him except in this instance, and the best thing for us to do is swallow this and go on and we'll have Jennings the next time. Now, that would be our normal procedure. So there were probably occasions when we, in fact, maybe even [acted] in a fit of pique. We were human, too.

But I never got over--I repeated it ad nauseam to my own people, to the Congressional Relations people and anybody that ever cared to listen to me--that you never, never go to that Hill and try to convince a member of Congress to commit political hara-kiri. Every one of them had been elected to office. There's one guy downtown that's been elected; none of us had been. And have that in mind; whatever the elements are available for persuasion, do so in that context. If it's not in his interest in his district but not overridingly adverse to his interest, there's always the possibility that you can persuade him, or we can persuade him, or the President can persuade him. But if it is clearly something that's going to cause him serious political difficulty in his district and he tells you no, carry it out to the end, but try to understand. And there's always tomorrow.

Tape 3 of 4, Side 1

G: --a problem with a VA hospital in Florida.

O: I don't remember that.

G: I don't know whether it was one that [Spessard] Holland was interested in or what, but it was a question where you had a difficult political problem there with a public work.

O: With a project?

G: Yes.

O: It was a VA hospital?

G: I think so, yes.

O: I don't remember it.

G: Okay. I notice in going through the files--

O: Before we get off this subject, I hope I've made it clear what I think of patronage and the real impact of patronage. I did have a situation one time regarding a senator that I thought was quite interesting. That was when Strom Thurmond left the party. He was, of course, a member of the Senate but he was no longer a Democrat. Strom came to see me and couldn't understand why he would be discontinued as a source for recommendations for postal appointments in his state and sat there and actually just refused to accept it. He had to finally, but I couldn't get over the fact that he would feel that, having left the party, he should remain on the roster. That was one fallout from patronage that had its humorous aspect.

G: I read about an occasion in which President Kennedy appeared on a platform in California at a speech and simply wouldn't allow the local congressmen, or a local congressman, to be on the podium with him, because this guy had voted against foreign aid or had not been supportive of the administration or something like that. Do you recall that incident? It was a very deliberate--

O: I don't recall that incident, but we did have trouble with a member of Congress. I believe it was on the foreign aid program. It was of a serious nature. He went out of his way to oppose us and be of assistance to Otto Passman in his annual exercise. And that was due to a VA hospital.

G: That was [D. S.] Saund, I think, S-A-U-N-D.

O: Yes, Saund. We were limited in the use of the stick there, too. But that was very aggravating, because from our position this was a totally justifiable action we were taking. There was no merit to Saund's argument in opposition to this thing. And then to have Saund to go to your underbelly where anybody can take a shot at you--that's an easy one,

that's a free one. And our resentment was strong. If that's the congressman that wasn't on the platform, I don't know, but it could well have been.

G: Yes.

O: Incidentally, you might overlook members at times. You didn't do it very often but one aspect of that would be who is going to fly on the president's plane. He's going to California and you're going to have a number of members of Congress. You would start with the Democratic senator or senators, the congressmen from the district or districts each instance that he was going to stop in. Then beyond that, of course, you have some leeway and you make some judgments. We would put together the list and try to recognize support beyond the call of duty. And then the reverse, there might be times when we neglected to think of somebody that might have enjoyed the trip or gotten some exposure from it, because we felt he hadn't earned that right. Now, there again, it's a rather small item, but there were times when it could be quite significant, because that was an area in which there was great congressional interest, no matter how they were voting. There was overriding interest in being part of the traveling party. There are a myriad of other things of that nature: how often you were invited to White House functions might have something to do with your voting record. But there again, those are the elements of the stick; it isn't a very large, heavy stick that you can wield.

G: One memorandum involved Florida again and I think it was a request from the Hill to have the President come down to Florida to dedicate something or be there, and it was something that Holland was interested in. Holland I gather was even trying to piggyback on the President's friendship with [George] Smathers, and you, or someone on your staff, wrote that the President gets to see Smathers when he's in Washington, that that's not an excuse to go to Florida and dedicate this thing. And besides, Holland hadn't supported the administration at all. He hadn't been helpful at all so [you were] recommending against the trip.

O: Yes. Well, we'd do that. In fact, that probably was construed by us as an opportunity to send a message. And we'd have no hesitancy on that. That was one where there was no real negative to it, you're right, because Senator Holland was a nice, gentlemanly fellow who I don't recall supported us in any meaningful way during my experiences with him.

G: Now, last time you did talk about the foreign aid bill in 1961 but there are a couple of other items related to that that I want to ask you about. One concerns Wayne Hays; I have a note that he was very helpful on the floor in that fight. Do you recall specifically what he did?

O: Well, that's what I recall, is help. Wayne was a colorful figure in the Congress. He was an outspoken fellow. He received quite a good deal of attention; he was quite aggressive. And when he got into a battle or showed an interest in getting into something to be of assistance to you, he could be helpful. He was the kind of a guy you'd just as soon have on your side rather than in the opposition on that Hill. I don't recall the specifics of his

help; I recall that he was a help. Wayne would rather enjoy involving himself in debate and discussion in that battle because of the position of Otto Passman.

G: Oh, really?

O: That would be right up Wayne's alley; he'd enjoy just taking Otto on. You didn't have to go far to determine Wayne's views or positions. And if Wayne registered enthusiasm, it would be our tendency to enlist him in the battle and play some role in it.

G: Kennedy evidently, as part of his strategy, sought quite a bit of help from the GOP on this piece of legislation.

O: You had to. Foreign aid was a nightmare. Innately you're dealing with an item that comes up to haunt you regularly. It is a classic example of a responsibility to request legislative action when there's hardly a member of Congress that would have any concern about negative political fallout by opposing. Foreign aid was generally referred to as a giveaway. It was ridiculous. It's like the debt ceiling--a vote against increasing the debt ceiling, that's as safe as voting for motherhood. You vote against foreign aid, that's great, too. You can demagogue the devil out of both of those, and a lot of people did demagogue the devil out of them.

So, consequently, in approaching foreign aid and the debt ceiling, but the focus on foreign aid, your appeal really came to "Hey, you can't do this to me. You can't do that to him. Come on, he may in some ways feel as you do about a lot of this, that there are elements of softness in this program and there's a lot of unfairness in terms of distributions."

I think I mentioned it before. Our efforts in foreign aid even reached the point where we actually took the foreign aid dollars and broke them down district by district. We concluded that probably eighty cents of every dollar went into products or into services that were helpful and created employment in congressional districts. And we just took all the four hundred and thirty-five congressional districts, broke them down, and determined just where the money flowed. We provided this to members looking for a handle where they could say, "Yes, I voted for it because--," then try to get the local media to publicize the benefit to that district that might push the congressman a little bit. This was motivated by some degree of desperation. How do you handle a legislative item that hasn't any constituency really.

G: No base.

O: Compounding that, you had a person who had the reins of foreign aid in his hands, Otto Passman, who detested foreign aid but could not and would not step aside and let somebody else handle it. So you had an issue that had no constituency, a general tendency to ridicule it as a giveaway, and you had a fellow that had your destiny in his hands who had every intention to do what he could to destroy it. You put all that together and you've

got a problem.

G: Yes.

O: I remember one of the meetings we had, a top bipartisan leadership meeting. [We'd] try to get away from the demagoguery and have the Dirksens and Hallecks say, "Oh, come on, we'll have a little fun with you and push you around, but there has to be a foreign aid program and we'll try to help work it out or at least not stand in the way of it." I think it was Ev Dirksen who told the President, "I remember a similar meeting, bipartisan, with Eisenhower. Eisenhower said, 'I want to tell you one thing. Don't ever, any one of you, suggest to me that I allow Otto Passman in this building. I never want to see that man again in my life!'" So there was that understanding that Otto Passman wasn't being a partisan at all, he was just against everything and everybody that was involved.

G: I noticed that Kennedy did get a message of support on foreign aid from former President Eisenhower. Do you recall how that evolved, or was this part of--?

O: I believe that in this area, as well as in other areas, the former President was helpful. There was a very pleasant relationship in the White House between my predecessor, Bryce Harlow, and all of us. And Bryce Harlow remained very close to Eisenhower. Eisenhower had a great deal of confidence in him. It was apparent to us that if you wanted to communicate with Eisenhower--of course you could president to president--just to feel things out or determine an attitude or potential area of help or assistance, Bryce Harlow was the appropriate person to contact. He was in that role on occasions. I communicated with Bryce Harlow, not specifically on the Eisenhower contacts, but on a variety of matters. We became friends and remained friends throughout those years, and I can't answer to this day but what I think of it. It was the night of the 1968 election and I was in Minneapolis. It was in the early hours when what was unanimously agreed by media to be a lost cause before the polls opened was turning out to be something otherwise, a relatively close election.

G: Very close, yes.

O: I was with Hubert and a call came which I did not receive immediately. In fact, there was a considerable delay before I received a note that this person wanted to talk to me, and it was Bryce Harlow calling from Nixon's headquarters. My curiosity was aroused but by the time I got the message, it was all over and in that mental state I never got back to the call. Several times afterwards I thought of it in terms of running into Bryce and saying, "I've just got to know why you were calling me that night." I'd still be curious about it. But Harlow was every inch a gentleman, and extremely bright. He had close contacts in the Nixon Administration.

G: Yes. He served a similar transition function.

O: Yes. So in response to the foreign aid and the Eisenhower support, I don't remember

specifically asking Harlow to intervene with Eisenhower, but somewhere along the line you can be sure he was involved in that expression of support.

G: Another element of this bipartisan support evidently was President Kennedy getting some of his high-level Republican appointees to help in the matter. Do you recall that component of it?

O: Yes. You had some, not an inordinate number, but there were some acknowledged national figures that were Republicans that were in the administration, and they were communicated with regularly. I had occasions to talk to them, the President did, and we tried to utilize their potential whenever we could at their discretion. It was never an effort to push them into anything, but they were very willing people. An example of that is Doug Dillon; he was an active participant in some of our legislative efforts.

G: I mentioned the note of the one example of the congressman who wasn't on the platform with President Kennedy. Apparently there was another one who, after not supporting foreign aid, found a federal project missing from the budget subsequently. A new federal building or something was deleted from the budget after that. Do you recall who that was or the specifics?

O: No, but I certainly would not suggest it didn't happen.

G: One interesting aspect of this whole executive-legislative relationship that I hadn't considered before was the navy. I noticed that you wanted to be notified of which congressmen were getting these trips by the navy to Guantanamo or places like that so you could keep tabs of what kind of perks they were getting, presumably.

O: It wasn't confined to the navy.

G: (Laughter) Well, why do you say--?

O: The air force or--yes.

G: Tell me what the range of these activities were.

O: Traditionally the majority leadership will authorize travel. We said, wait a minute, the Defense Department and those airplanes and ships aren't part of the legislative branch. And while we were not going to go so far as to establish a procedure that there was no way a member of Congress could be on a boat or a plane without our approval, we were sure as the devil going to try to come up with some idea, some procedure where that fellow was made aware--by the leader that he went through, whether it was [John] McCormack or whoever it might be at the moment, [Carl] Albert--that the trip was approved or his presence was approved only because it had been relayed to the White House for consideration. I don't recall an instance where we denied it, maybe we did somewhere. But it was just another little piece of the action to remind him that, if we care

to, we could have a procedure at the snap of a finger where the navy or the air force had no authority to designate and that it had to be approved at the White House level in the Commander in Chief's office. In other words, we are watching a little closer than you may think we are.

G: Well, there were apparently a lot of congressmen taking these naval cruises to--I guess they were inspection trips or something of that nature.

O: Still are.

(Laughter)

O: Yes, that was the extent of it. I wouldn't suggest that there weren't times that we didn't react, as I said, in a fit of pique or just a little bit of arrogance. But I don't really think that there was--there could have been but not to my [recollection]--a time when you carried it to the extent that you had really caused a problem that would be counterproductive and an enemy was made. I'd put this in the category of the VIP visits to the White House or social visits or inclusion in formal dinners or the Sequoia or the rest. We realized that a great deal of this went on and there was no White House involvement, they--the members--dealt directly through the naval liaison or air force liaison until they duly got a memo, "Get a plane in place and we're going to six countries in Europe." And we all know they're junkets and we all know that it goes on I think probably to a greater extent than ever despite the fact that there's been a lot of focus of attention on this over the years.

G: Well, presumably this would be something that the leadership would exercise some discretion on in terms of--

O: Yes.

G: --who deserved to go and who didn't.

O: Yes, and we left it up to them.

G: Is it correct that Sam Rayburn was very much opposed to a lot of these junkets, that it was very difficult--?

O: Yes, he was. First of all, Sam Rayburn didn't take junkets. Secondly, he was a firm believer in constituent service, constituent attention. He'd say these "fellers" that become enamored with the Washington social life or seeing their name in some society column, by God, they'll keep doing that and overlooking their [constituents] back home and they're going to pay a price. This traveling around the world, doing all this sort of thing, no, he was very much turned off on all that. It wasn't because he didn't travel; he just didn't believe in that. He just thought it was a rip-off--most of it. I'm not suggesting that there aren't times when it isn't justifiable but, boy, there are a lot of times when it simply isn't. He felt very strongly about that.

G: Do you think he felt that it reflected badly on the prestige of the institution, too? That that might have been--?

O: Yes, that was part of it, too. The institution, in the final analysis, was Sam Rayburn's life--and his overriding pride in it and his great desire to at all times protect it. So anything of that nature that he considered negative concerned him. And I don't know what he said to his colleagues, but he never had any reluctance to being candid with me. We'd chat about it. He'd sit on his porch and see those constituents in his home district, and, by gosh, that's what it's all about. They've sent you here, you respond.

G: The question of congressional travel, could it work in reverse? For example, if you wanted a member of Congress or the Senate out of the way for a vote and you knew he was wrong on an issue and it was a close vote, could you concoct a trip for him, an attractive trip to get him out of the way?

O: Not really. That would be pretty obvious. But the reverse of that, however, happened often; we'd provide transportation for them to get back.

G: To get back.

O: Oh, yes. We utilized the military in that regard. If a fellow had a speaking engagement--of course, there was a lot of negotiation with the Congress, the House and Senate, in terms of the scheduling of legislation and the checking and rechecking on potential attendance in close votes--there were occasions where we'd provide military transportation to get him back. There were rumbles on the Hill at times regarding that, but we chose to get it done and worry about the fallout afterward. And there were times where we had no hesitancy to have it public knowledge--that was in crisis times. If Congress was not in session or something, there were occasions when we arranged rather massive military movements to ensure that those that the President wanted to meet with were available--the Cuban Missile [Crisis] would be a good example. [It occurred] at a point when they were out of session, and we had planes all over the skies making sure they were back. But on an individual vote basis, there were times we did that.

G: On the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example--we'll get to that and I want to ask you about that in detail--but for now, how did you present it to them, or whoever called them present it to them? I mean obviously they wouldn't go into great detail over the phone.

O: No, it's very simple. There was a situation that has arisen that just demands your presence, and the President has asked me to contact you directly and say that you must be here. Not an order, "you must be here," [but] "in your interest and the national interest, you must be present." And I never had anyone--I can think of a Republican senator from California. I remember it because a fighter plane brought him in from California and he had never had that experience with the helmet--

(Laughter)

G: He what--he--?

O: With the helmet on--

(Laughter)

--and everything, whatever kind of plane it was. Kuchel.

G: Thomas Kuchel.

O: Yes. But they wouldn't question me on that. They knew that a call was not made unless it really, truly was urgent. And we'd make every effort with both presidents, but that sort of crisis occurred at times in the Kennedy period. And it was essential, as the President saw it, that the appropriate members of Congress be briefed and that each person present be solicited to express his views and comments or recommendations, if nothing but for the record. Not the public record, but the record, because we knew that when something like that occurred, you knew that the only comments would probably be, "Whatever you decide, Mr. President, we support you."

G: I have an impression that perhaps Lyndon Johnson did, on occasion, plan a trip to a congressman's district to coincide with the need for him to be away from a particular vote or something.

O: That could have happened, I just don't recall it.

G: It was not a pattern?

O: It was a pretty sophisticated operation, but it wasn't a pattern. It could have happened. It's intriguing.

G: Well, I think in particular when some of the poverty legislation was up and civil rights legislation, didn't he go to Appalachia and take some of those members that might have been wrong on--?

O: Yes, I do recall there was a trip of that nature.

G: Was that a coincidence there?

O: I don't know. It's a little intricate, really. I mean, people see through that pretty easily. If you have them in Appalachia today, you might find the vote has been postponed until next week.

G: Yes. Okay, let's see. Let me ask you about the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. Were you

involved at all in any of the administration's discussion?

O: No.

G: How did you learn of the invasion?

O: I learned of it just prior to the President advising congressional leaders regarding it. I was present with him when it was in process and a debacle was imminent. I was not involved prior to that. And I became involved again because of the need to advise and the need to inform. So--

G: Well, describe the occasion where you were with him when it became evident that the plan was not working.

O: I was in the group in his office. It was one of those informal things. It had reached the point where it was clearly a debacle. And my reaction was a pure political reaction, I'm sorry to say, but that was my gut reaction: "My God, we've been around here a brief period of time. We've just gotten our feet wet. We're trying to move things. The President is trying to exercise leadership, and this blow to the solar plexus has got to be politically devastating. [It] will set him back and the administration back significantly in terms of public approval."

The CIA and the Defense Department before we arrived had been staunch advocates. I'm not suggesting, and I don't know, whether there was any great reluctance on the part of the President to go forward with it, but certainly their presentation to him was very, very strong. Their evaluation of it was all on the positive side from "highly professional people," quote, unquote. They had devoted a lot of time and effort to putting this into place. There had been communication between [Allen] Dulles and the top staff of the CIA and a half a dozen of us, the top staff of the White House. We had dinner one evening in a restaurant in Washington. This wasn't the subject, and it was sort of just to get to know each other. That didn't indicate there would be continuing communication, but this was a new administration, a new White House, and I think the CIA people wanted us to know who they were and they wanted to at least meet us. And that's all I knew about the CIA.

But I did feel we were in for a devastating political situation in terms of public reaction. Jack Kennedy met difficulty and potential disaster in an extremely courageous way. He did what came naturally to him. Not due to any suggestion on my part, he figuratively stepped up to it almost like standing on the White House steps and saying, "My fellow Americans, I've completely goofed. I've really made a terrible mistake," wrong judgment and what have you. No indication he was totally disturbed with the advisers that he had inherited and the advice they had given him.

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O: He was extremely candid in accepting full responsibility.And to our utter amazement the next Gallup Poll showed a significant rise in support for him, which was a real lesson to me that I reflected on years later. I'd like to think I would react the same way in his position. I don't know. Who knows? But I think I'd be trying to figure out how, politically speaking, you could handle something like this.It's amazing about the public generally, and how they react. They reacted to his candor and his admission, if you will, of guilt, and it was a plus. Not planned that way, not conceived that way, and certainly not envisioned that way by me.

On a later occasion, I saw a president in a position of his own doing, but nevertheless a position that was devastating: Watergate. And I've always felt, and I remember thinking about it at the time, as I was personally involved. I was the victim of Watergate. If this man had the guts, the innate character, to step out on those White House steps and say, "My fellow Americans, this is what I did and all I can say to you is I deeply regret it. I hold myself accountable for my staff or anybody in this government that did wrong, and I can only commit that I'll never allow something like this to happen again," he would have completed his presidency.

We're talking about all kinds of procedures and patronage and negotiations with the Congress, but you cannot divorce the human element from all of this in the final analysis. It comes right back to that.

G: While you were with President Kennedy was there any discussion of supplying the air support that was evidently canceled, the second round of that?

O: No. I wasn't involved.

G: Did you feel like there was a division within the White House with regard to how to handle the Bay of Pigs once they saw that it was not working, or whether some people who advocated--?

O: No. No, I can't testify to comments that might have been made by other members of the staff. I certainly didn't have any specific suggestion. And it was a little bit like the meeting I described with the leadership of the Congress, the President, in the time of crisis. No one is going to suggest or urge that the president take this action or that action. I think you feel comfort in saying, "It's your baby, Mr. President." There's a tendency to reflect that Bobby directed Jack's mind. I can testify that wasn't the case. Jack was well able to make his own determinations and decisions, and he made them on so many occasions where I had involvement. He had great respect for Bobby, appreciated his advice and counsel. In the final analysis, he would make his decision, and, of course, into the equation would be Bobby's views. He greatly respected him, but Bobby didn't make his decisions. He made his own.

G: What impact did the Bay of Pigs have on President Kennedy's own thinking about the reliability of CIA and military questions?

O: He became quite cynical. He felt he had been entrapped. I think it left--not because we spoke about it at any great length however--an imprint in the sense that he had a degree of cynicism regarding recommendations that were forthcoming in the future. He had learned his lesson.

G: Yes.

O: "It's a fait accompli. Let's go forward."

G: His explanation to the members of Congress during this period, any insights on that?

O: No, it was no different than his explanation to the people.

G: There's an indication that it may have even helped him in one respect in that the House did, right after that, approve a six hundred million dollar special fund for Latin American development, which I gather had not been considered that feasible before.

O: Yes, that's right. I don't know as you could document that, but it clearly indicates that his handling of the situation was helpful. To what degree, no one will ever know, but there was a plus element in it. They read the Gallup Polls, too.

G: Yes. Was Kennedy surprised by the Gallup Poll when it did show--?

O: I don't recall any specific conversation. We were. I would assume he was.

G: Let's talk about education legislation, which is a big item in each of these years. Do you recall the problem of sorting out all of the various elements, the higher education component, the parochial school aid, the medical school aid, and the public school aid at this point?

O: What do you mean by sorting out?

G: Well, keeping the different elements separated so that you could pass the ones that had the chance, and the priorities, which ones should come first, or packaging them. You had a tremendous range of--

O: Yes.

G: In fact, this was one of the criticisms, that there were too many, rather than focusing your efforts on one. Let me ask you to discuss this whole area.

O: Well, the reason there was such diversity goes to the depth of commitment of the president in this area, the very strong views he had regarding the federal role in the field of education, which all of us shared. I felt very, very strongly about it. But there were two

areas that--there were a couple of others, but two--I sort of focused on: one was what we could accomplish to ensure reaching the goal of full educational opportunity; second was Medicare, for personal reasons, my own family and the devastating costs. You had that additional element in your thought process.

The strategy on what came first and how it was segmented I don't think was really an initial strategy. It naturally evolved. You wanted to propose in just about every meaningful area of education. Could you encompass this in an omnibus package? Could you segment it and some pass and some not?

I'll have to say that the impact of the religious problem was not confined to elementary or secondary [education]. My guess is I didn't envision the depth and seriousness of that impact initially. I recognized there was this sensitivity and we were not going to include any aspects of private aid and assistance. But how that would impact and undermine much of what we were proposing, I did not sense. We should have understood that if Kennedy, in launching this far-reaching program, had avoided any private [school] assistance and was not a Catholic, it would not have hit the way it did. We were not totally sensitive to it, because we didn't really dwell on any of this. We didn't say, "Isn't it a shame?" or "Shouldn't there be--?" We simply were constitutionalists. If you were tempted to work out something in this area, you were in no position to do so in any event. We were the beneficiaries of the expansion of the Rules Committee, for example. Out of that Rules Committee came at least one member that wouldn't have been there if we hadn't had an expanded Rules Committee, and he turned out to be a key to this problem.

G: This is [James] Delaney, isn't it?

O: Yes. I think we should have recognized it. Delaney's opposition, obviously, was constituent, and understandable. And yet he had a great affection for the President, total supporter of the President. Couldn't he overcome this in terms of saying, "In some way I'll go the route on this but you have to advocate next year something more," something by way of negotiation. But he was totally adamant. And part of that had to be that Delaney resented that this fellow Kennedy would ignore this entire area purposely because he was a Catholic. There was something very negative in all of this, from Delaney's perspective. And yet you have a tremendous commitment in this area. This is one that you are emotionally involved in--this whole education situation. So no matter what strategies were considered the fact of the matter is that the cloud over the whole exercise in my recollection--and I may be exaggerating this, there were other problems, of course--basically and fundamentally was that a guy had purposely ignored his own people, because he was embarrassed. And your defense, "Wait a minute, the Constitution is clear, the Supreme Court decision, everything is there," so it made no sense to try this. Oh, no, they're not going to buy that. They would have bought it from John Smith, but they weren't going to buy it from Jack Kennedy.

It began to cause problems extending far beyond Delaney. The National Education Association public comments that were being made just exacerbated the

problem. That then brought the private school sector, Catholics predominantly but others in the private school sector, into play with barbed debate and all that. It didn't create a schism perhaps because there probably wasn't unity of purpose. But it certainly eliminated up front any hope of a united effort on the part of the organized people in the field of education. You had a battle ongoing. There weren't that many of the same religion as Kennedy in the White House, but I think there was a perception probably that the White House was loaded with people like us, so-called Irish Mafia. But the fact of the matter is, if you looked at our representation, it probably would be comparable to previous administrations. But nobody ever paid any attention--we didn't, we never took a head count or anything like that. Who cared? That was our attitude. But I guess I have mentioned this before and I'm repeating myself, but I had to, even in the high good humor of Cardinal Cushing.

G: [Richard] Cushing, wasn't it?

O: In the very pleasant way that he delivered the message to me one night in Paul Young's Restaurant. He came over to my table, and you know the accent, you probably recall Cushing.

G: Brogue, yes.

O: I stood and greeted him. "How's Jack?" I said, "He's fine." "Well," he said, "I haven't seen him in a while." I said, "Oh, gosh--" "Well," he said, "I like him; you know, we've known each other all our lives. But I want you to tell him something. I don't want to embarrass him. I am in and out of Washington every now and then and sometime I'd like to drop by just to say hello, and he can bring me in the back door so nobody will know I'm there." He said, "Billy Graham visits quite often, and he should come in the front door and I think that's great. But just tell him not to worry about it, that if I could come by and say hello sometime at his convenience and he doesn't have to explain my presence."You know, laughing, kidding, sort of arm around my shoulder.

So that ended the conversation. Cushing was never going to publicly cause any problem. There was none of that. It was just that he had a feeling that perhaps Jack was a little sensitive in this area. And not too long afterward the Cardinal was in and we all dropped in to visit with him in the Oval Office. All I'm saying is, and I don't want to exaggerate it in terms of the education battle, but I think that we were a little insensitive to reactions of people that were in significant positions. Not to dwell on it or make it the overriding issue, clearly it would be a mistake also to simply dismiss it, because it did have an effect.

I don't remember the details, we had occasion I think the following year to extend some education programs. I found myself in my White House office with the representatives of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO, and we were sharing assignments on head counts.

G: Is that right? One follow-up question on the Cardinal Cushing story. Did that subsequent visit to the White House that he made result from--?

O: Not really.

G: I assume that you told President Kennedy about this.

O: I mentioned it to him, and we had a chuckle over it. It wasn't that serious and, as far as Cushing was concerned, there was a very warm friendship between the two of them. And it's like everything else. You're in there in the White House, you don't sit with a chart up on the wall, "When was the last time I saw Cushing?" or this one or that one.

G: But do you think Kennedy was reluctant to bring him in?

O: No. I think it was a matter of the Cardinal not contacting the White House. He hadn't contacted the White House in a period of time. If the Cardinal wanted to come in and say hello to Kennedy, he would have been ushered in immediately.I think it was a combination of that and the Cardinal giving me a little ribbing about "Gee, Billy Graham walks in and out of the front door, so tell Jack I'll go in the back door just to say hello."

G: Now, [Francis] Cardinal Spellman was heavily involved in this education issue as an adversary. He was on Delaney's side.

O: Yes.

G: How did you deal with him?

O: We didn't. I didn't.

G: Did you get any help from Cardinal Cushing on this matter?

O: I don't recall his involvement. I don't think the hierarchy ever really got to the point. We weren't really getting this job done in any event. Did it come to the point of massive confrontation, I think that really the way the dice rolled in this thing, you had a Delaney, you had a Hugh Carey that was trying to figure out ways to build a bridge, which was the way you'd try to handle this or any other matter.

As far as Spellman was concerned, Spellman was known to be a conservative. He was assumed to probably be a Republican, although those fellows I assume don't walk around with their party designation on their sleeve. The only contact I ever had with Spellman was in terms of stamp collecting after I became postmaster general. But others might have talked to him. But I'll tell you, if you said to me at the outset, "Well, obviously there's some trouble brewing and why don't you see if we can't get hold of Spellman or have the President contact Spellman," I would have suggested, "Forget it." Spellman would have been in opposition to much of the Kennedy program that had nothing to do

with the private schools and education. That's his track record. That wouldn't be Cushing's track record. He made no bones of being an avowed liberal.

G: Two very different. . . .

O: Oh, yes.

G: John McCormack was known to favor the parochial school element. How did you come to terms with McCormack?

O: Well, John McCormack did everything he could to try to bring Delaney into line. What would be overriding with John McCormack was the innate need for the program. And this was a Democratic Party program, and John McCormack at no time evidenced the concerns that Delaney evidenced. John McCormack was every inch a team player, every inch the supporter of the president; that applied to Johnson or Kennedy or any Democratic president. And he was not, and he always told me that, a person that would go public in opposition to a president even of the opposite party, [because of] his great respect for the office. But with Kennedy, he was just a dedicated advocate. So with McCormack and the other leaders up there, the effort was to convince Delaney to give us what we construed was the decisive vote.

My recollection is that on one evening when we invited Congressman Delaney down to visit with the President that Tip O'Neill came with him. And the Delaney I knew, very honestly, he was a very forthright guy. He was a fellow that didn't quibble about position. You had it up or down with Delaney on any issue. And in this instance this fellow was adamant. Wilbur Cohen must have this in great detail. Wilbur, as I've told you before, was most aggressive, and had an innate knowledge of the subject and all its intricacies. We sat in my office on different occasions trying to develop strategies including a time when Hugh Carey was present with several of us and talked about loaning textbooks.

So Delaney was a loner, because even those that shared his religious convictions were just intensely interested in moving this legislation.

G: I have a press account that indicates that during this period there was a showdown between McCormack and Rayburn; McCormack wanting some inclusion of parochial school aid here, and Rayburn determined to get the public school aid to a vote first and get that cleared--

O: That could have happened.

G: --and reportedly McCormack acquiesced. Do you have any knowledge of that meeting?

O: No, because I had no problem with McCormack in this area. That would not foreclose McCormack, if he thought of it, going the route of Hugh Carey, for example.

McCormack has strong religious convictions. And he followed his convictions to his credit. I'm not suggesting that McCormack would not have embraced the Hugh Carey proposal or similar proposals. He was not a constitutionalist in this. I think the reality of whether or not you could get enactment of education [legislation] was apparent to him. So I would not suggest that he and Rayburn didn't have that discussion. But what kind of inclusion? See, that's really what you were up against. What kind of inclusion? You have the religious aspect of this but let's face it, that isn't any different than conflicts that exist in any legislative proposal. How do you bridge them? If you sat and said, "Well, let's have a significant inclusion of private school aid." At that time you're going to lose the support of the NEA totally and a good piece of the Congress. So how do you build a bridge that keeps people in place for a roll call so you can get legislation enacted? That's no different than the effort to have a meaningful civil rights bill. It's all part of the process.

G: One of the press accounts blamed Secretary [Abraham] Ribicoff for not being clear-cut in advocating the public school rather than public and private, and also for vacillating on the administration's view that there was a constitutionality of across-the-board aid to public schools.

O: I don't recall.

G: You don't feel that Ribicoff was a problem at the time?

O: I don't recall him as a problem.

G: How in the world did you--?

O: What may be in some people's minds and what they say and do may be two different things. It's a program that we all had embraced up front. That's where you are. If you have some problems with this and you see some overriding negatives in terms of impact on the President as a result of a road you're going to travel, you should up front include that in the equation when the decision process is in place. You've put this on your agenda and there you are, and you have a variety of education legislation, you have a chairman of the committee, Adam Powell, that you may or may not find on any given day and you have all the rest of this.

But I said perhaps it was my insensitivity or failure to recognize the dimensions of this problem as it would unfold. And I'm not trying to place my light conversation with Cushing in that category at all. I'm just saying that there were elements in here that I should have understood better than I did. And I had no problem with advocacy of education legislation that didn't include private schools. I'm a realist, and I might feel there ought to be some way to be helpful to private schools, but that wasn't what we were involved with. We had a proposal; it did not include private schools. Now you've got to make every effort to enact [it]. In the process of compromise, if somebody says to me, "Well, maybe we can get away with a little bit of private school," I'll buy that. It's the old story of maybe I haven't the whole loaf or maybe there's part of it that you prefer not to

have, but, my God, does the end justify the means? And I'm sure I'd sit there, as I did with Hugh Carey that night, saying, "Great, I can see where this might help us move this."

G: Well, there was even at the time a formula being discussed whereby you could, say, under NDEA money allocate some to private schools for science and medical research and things like that?

O: Yes. Yes. They weren't buying. (Laughter)

G: Was this offered at the time to get some of these advocates of parochial school aid to go along or wait--?

O: We thought we were stating the obvious, that there was this area of potential assistance.

G: Yes, but they didn't buy it? And what you're saying is you should have just been more explicit, is that right?

O: I think that there should have been a greater attempt up front, and it would have called for the creativity of everybody. There should have been two things: one, the anticipation that this area could be very troublesome, and, secondly, a full exploration of any possibility of bridging in any conceivable way at the outset. It was difficult; it probably was impossible, but it wasn't completely explored. And I'm not faulting anyone. I fault myself, I guess, because as a Catholic I should have anticipated some of these people that I knew very well could be very adamant on this subject to the point where even their affection for the President wouldn't be enough. I don't think I envisioned that--that doesn't mean that we would have scuttled the program. But I think that we should have been a little better in tune with what we could anticipate, and conceivably the Hugh Carey type of proposal might have been in the equation in some earlier stage and that might have had some impact.

But who knows? The fact is that the President was in an impossible situation in which to negotiate anything. Sure, you could say, "There's funding in another area that can be [used]," but that really. . . . And we all know that constitutional provisions, court decisions, are always subject to interpretation and review. You know, you're not really totally leveling--it's a little bit of a cop-out. And there are times when that's all right and it works, but in this instance it didn't. And I think really what's interesting about it is that it did bring into focus the power that could be exercised by a handful, indeed one person, at a given moment and that you had underestimated his strength of purpose--his commitment.

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G: --ironic in a sense because the fight over the Rules Committee had been launched to eliminate that one-person control.

O: That's right. But there wasn't any real fallout that I would call mean or bitter or rancorous. In fact, that includes Delaney. Delaney wasn't in there screaming or hollering; he was in there as a soft-spoken, adamant fellow that was not going to be--his view wasn't going to be affected no matter who talked to him. That's all, and accept it. Because there were other problems, you know, that the committee--so much of our legislation then and later was funneling into the Labor and Education Committee.

And Adam Powell was certainly an extremely interesting guy to know. I got to know him intimately. But he could be an exasperating fellow and he could be particularly exasperating to a man like John McCormack, a straight-arrow fellow that was very businesslike concerning the function of the Congress, its various committees, its timetables and all the rest. And to find that one of his committee chairmen was elusive and difficult to pin down in terms of schedules tested John's temper on a number of occasions. But McCormack would, in meetings we'd have in his office that attempted to persuade Adam to a) schedule hearings; b) have a timetable for mark-up; and c) be supportive and available on the floor as an advocate when it was scheduled, all of that was in the context of the reverend. John would always refer to Adam as reverend. And he'd say, "Now, Reverend, this," and "Reverend, you must do that," and "Reverend, I ask you or plead with you to do this." (Laughter) And there was a little bit of humor to it all.

So John McCormack found himself one Sunday morning in my office at the White House with Carl Albert and me because we can't find Adam Powell again. Through the White House switchboard we finally located Adam Powell in Bimini and really got him on the telephone, and there's the Speaker of the House of Representatives--I guess he was the speaker by then, he might have still been majority leader--pleading with Adam Powell to return from Bimini and saying, "Now, Reverend"--(Laughter)--and then saying to me, "He says he can't, hasn't any transportation." I said, "We'll provide the transportation." "Reverend, we'll have a plane waiting." (Laughter) And this is on a Sunday, and Adam was down there, whatever he was doing down there--(Laughter)--[he] couldn't care less at the moment. And yet when he would focus, he was great. When he would focus, he was an impressive fellow. He really could conduct committee hearings and do his job. The problem was getting him to focus. And the net result of it is there was a lot of heavy leaning on the part of us in the White House on Jim O'Hara on that committee.

G: Oh, really?

O: We leaned on Jim excessively and Jim tried in a lot of ways to fill in for Adam in trying to move things along. And there were some stalwarts on the committee, too, several.

G: There were strong personalities. One of the attributes that is accredited to Adam Clayton Powell was that he was able to keep Edith Green in line to some extent, to get her cooperation. Was this a problem and was he able to do--?

O: Well, Edith had very strong views in this area. She was one of the original supporters of Jack Kennedy, as you know, and couldn't have been more staunch in her advocacy from

day one regarding his candidacy, but in this area it was very troublesome to Edith to have any private school aspects to this. And there were other areas, too, where Adam--Adam Powell had a capacity to disarm you. He really did; he did with me. As aggravated as you would get, as frustrated as you would get, when you finally got Adam into the office or you were in his office, after a half an hour of Adam's storytelling you found you were warm friends all over again, everything was going to be halcyon, everything was going to go on schedule until the next time. But he had that capacity. He had some real leadership qualities and he had a great sense of humor. And he knew he was driving everybody mad and rather enjoyed it.

G: Can you give me an example of his sense of humor?

O: Yes. I had an experience with him one day. He came into the White House. For some reason, he was in my office--and I should divert for a moment. Adam, to my knowledge, was the only person that I ever knew that addressed the President as Jack. And he did on a number of occasions, which always startled me. I don't know whether it startled the President or not, but it startled me. But Adam had a purpose in most things he did. But he was sitting there and he smoked these long, thin cigars. He was talking about his church in Harlem. I guess in membership it was the largest church in America; I don't know, my recollection was something like ten, fifteen thousand, fourteen thousand, whatever it was, members of the church. And he said, "Of course, I have a semiannual census."

G: Oh, a census of the congregation.

O: Yes, a census. And he said, "I have this semiannual census," and he had just thousands of members. And I said, "Why would you have a census twice a year?" He said, "Well, there's a five-dollar fee when they do a census, and the church has to be supported." And he did, he had a tremendous following and [was] a tremendous preacher. And he would meld his Sunday services, and I think every cabinet member wound up preaching at Adam's church at one time or another. He would just really demand the appearance of these people.

Then he got into some other area and it was obvious to me--he had a big smile on his face throughout all this and he knew that he was titillating me a little bit. I don't know how much of it was an exaggeration or just--and then he wound up, he said could he say hello to the President before he left. Well, obviously, he could say hello. I wasn't about to tell him the President was otherwise engaged. And we dropped in the Oval Office to say hello. To this day, I've never quite understood, or maybe I misunderstood, but he said to me, "Larry, let me finally say something to you. Always remember, where there's smoke, there's fire." And I remember I sat there and I thought, "I must have misunderstood what he just said." On the other hand, the son of a gun, I probably didn't misunderstand what he said, because he burst out into laughter. And he's laughing and I'm sitting there absolutely thunderstruck and I had no comment; I didn't know what in God's name you could say. And that ended the conversation. We went in and [said], "How are you,

Jack?" to the President. (Laughter) And he gave him one of his thin cigars.

Later on when I was out of [the government] and he was a former congressman, I'd see him occasionally. He was a sports buff, basketball buff, and I'd run into him in Madison Square Garden here. And even then he was wearing the T-shirt and the big medallion and chain. He always was an impressive-looking fellow and he always attracted attention. We would just kid around for a few minutes. He loved to tickle you, kid you, get you off balance. You didn't know quite how to respond to him. If you responded in kind, you might be in a real trap, so the best thing to do is just not say anything. But I thoroughly enjoyed him, with all his aggravations.

G: What was Kennedy's attitude toward him?

O: Liked him.

G: Did he?

O: Yes.

G: How did he assess him? Do you recall what he--?

O: Basically he understood, he knew what the problems were, what we were going through. He was kept fully abreast of all of this. But he couldn't refrain from a big grin, and some kind of kidding would take place. It was awfully difficult to have a serious conversation with Adam.

G: Really?

O: Yes, I mean he wasn't going to focus that long on anything serious. He brought his son in occasionally to White House ceremonies. He was a big, good-looking young man. I've lost track of him, but he was anxious to have his son get a feel for government, but I don't think the son ever followed that course. I don't know.

G: LBJ and Adam Clayton Powell--

O: I don't remember about that.

G: Did you ever hear Johnson talk about him?

O: No, I don't recall. I think that there was a different situation, too. I don't recall also how much of the Johnson period Adam bridged. Do you?

G: Well, let's see, I think--

O: It could have been all of--

G: --at least through 1966. Well, I think Perkins took over in 1967 or something like that. 1966 or 1967, some time in there.

O: When was he defeated? Powell was defeated at some point by Charlie Rangel in the primary here.

G: Well, I don't--but he was removed, wasn't he, as chairman of the committee and I think that took place--

O: Oh, he got in all kinds of--

G: --about 1966 or 1967. Perkins took over.

O: No, I don't recall. Also, I do recall that the period we're talking about was an extremely difficult one for us, you know--always that handful of votes margin if you prevailed, always just on tenterhooks on anything major, and that applied in committees and the floor of the House. So the attention directed to Adam, and the role that we had to seek from Adam was so significant. He was the focal point at times of White House discussion and leadership discussion. Now, perhaps I'm not recalling Johnson's reaction to Powell only because perhaps it wasn't as significant a situation as it was in our days because of the change in the Congress.

G: Sure. We'll take up that later. In this particular year, though, in 1961 you did get him to refrain from adding that antisegregation rider to the education bill. How did you do that?

O: I honestly don't remember. I was trying to think of what we gave him, but I don't recall that we gave him anything. Maybe if you jog my memory on that. I think he played that out for a while--he wasn't a spoiler. Really, when everything is said and done, all the Adam Powell stories and all of his unusual behavior and all the rest of it, he wasn't innately a mean fellow at all. He could articulate his views very well and he was truly at that point one of the black leaders in this country. But he was not a spoiler, he was not mean, and his tendency was to be on the team, when you finally got him to focus. It was more focus than anything else. Now, he would take something like that, play out the string, just to get everybody into an uproar and then he would make a determination probably not to include it because that would kill the legislation. So he'd let it go. What did you give him? What was the quid pro quo? I haven't any recollection of a quid pro quo.

G: I have a note that indicates here that perhaps he felt that Kennedy would withhold aid from segregated schools through executive action.

O: Could be, I don't remember.

G: You don't recall this being discussed?

O: No. I'll say this. The more I think about it, there had to be a quid pro quo. It would have been foolish of Adam to let go of that weapon or just drop it without some kind of compensating factor. And that could be in the area.

G: Well, he had brought up that rider every year, every time the school bill came up.

O: Yes, I know it. He did a lot of things every year. But it's interesting, isn't it. There are people you meet such as Adam, who are unique in their way, in their attitudes and their actions and can be a source of concern and aggravation to you. But I think the absence of real meanness or deviousness makes if easier to put up with those people. There were people that I didn't overly respect, a handful of them. There were people that you were not overly impressed with. By the same token, there were many people that you were most impressed with. But I don't recall that I became embittered with any individual up there. And I think in the case of Adam Powell, in the final analysis, when you really focus on the record, Adam Powell made a real contribution. I really do.

I think he outlived his position with the blacks in Harlem. I always equated, interestingly enough, the attitude of the blacks toward Adam to the attitude of the Irish toward James Michael Curley. So I related to a lot of this because we recognized, if we allowed ourselves to think about it, that James Michael Curley might be a rogue, but we refused to accept that or acknowledge it. We were very defensive concerning him, and we remained loyal to him, and why? Because with all of these aspects of Curley, he had great leadership qualities. He arrived on the political scene in Massachusetts at a time when people of my heritage were seeking someone that would have the courage to speak up and fight the establishment. And he did all that, and it was a breakthrough. But the very same people that admired [him] for all that, in a period of time lost admiration for Curley. They admired a new type of leader by the name of Jack Kennedy. But the man at the moment, at the time, performed a role in terms of breakthrough and recognition.

That's exactly what happened with Adam Clayton Powell. He might have been somewhat of a rogue, as Curley was to some degree, but the fact remains that at that time and place he spoke out, he took on the establishment, he took on the anti-black members of Congress head on. He defied them. He did unusual things. He acted in an unusual manner. He did not conform to the precepts of the establishment. All of that was applauded by his constituency. And then the breakthrough to some degree occurred and then they turned elsewhere. A Charlie Rangel became the congressman from the same district, an entirely different kind of fellow with whom they are very comfortable in terms of representing them. So it's the man at the time, and I often--and I think I might have even mentioned it in my book--in my association with Adam would think of Curley because there was a lot of similarity in terms of--

G: He was really the product of an earlier era, wasn't he, and outlived that era?

O: That's right. And outlived it. Yes.

G: Describe his relationship with the southerners, particularly the older--this was at a time when segregation was still in.

O: Yes. I was not privy to any relationship he had with them upon arrival in the Congress. I've heard a lot of stories about that.

G: What? Can you recall any?

O: Well, only that [when] Adam arrived, he was a very imposing individual on arriving at that scene. There was nothing about Adam--he had no reluctance whatsoever to step right up there and say, "Here I am, boys, take it or leave it, and that's your problem." (Laughter) "And I'm going to be here a while and you're going to hear a lot from me." (Laughter) I think perhaps by the time I got around to knowing Adam that some of that had toned down. I don't know. I never had any of the southern Democrats that I dealt with, and the senior fellows in the House or Senate, refer to Adam in any racially derogatory sense at all. I think by then they had become sort of accustomed to him around there. They might kid about Adam and Adam's travels and his social activities, but it was never in a racial context that I can recall. Even with all the problems that the leadership had with him, it never was in a racial context. None of that. It was more the fellow as he was, chairman of a committee, and he was unique.

G: Did Rayburn ever talk about him when you had these talks with Rayburn?

O: I don't recall, no.

G: Could Rayburn, or later McCormack, employ any devices to keep him on the job and keep him from taking these treks to the islands or wherever he went? I noticed this was a problem even in 1961 and 1962, having him in town for an important committee session.

O: Oh, sure. The President of the United States or no one else could contain Adam or handle him. But, see, Adam never resented your trying to find him and all that. (Laughter) He just remained aloof. So even when you found him, he just laughed. I can remember I chased him all over Washington night after night, and of course he had a staff all geared to avoidance.

G: Really?

O: Oh, sure. They would get messages to him, or they didn't really know where he had gone, or perhaps he was out to dinner. Nobody ever knew where he was. Nobody ever could find him, and you'd leave messages in every place you could imagine, and if Adam chose to, he might get back to you in a day or two, or he might not get back to you at all. You'd have to start all over again. (Laughter) And everyone obviously worked at it, but, as I told you, I think the best example of our inability to handle him was that Sunday when I looked around my office and saw the people sitting there, one purpose in mind: to get Adam Powell, find him in Bimini and get him back to Washington for the following day.

No, I don't know how the senior southern Democrats felt about him. They never expressed it, nor did I detect any individual or collective effort to go after him in any way, either.

G: He seems to have really run his committee with a strong hand, too. Was that the case? Did he--?

O: You bet. Listen, Adam Powell was a very intelligent man, very bright when he put his mind to it. That was all, just put his mind to it. If that fellow didn't run off to Bimini, believe me, he would have gone in the history books as one of the great powers in the Congress, because he had the tools. When he utilized those tools, he was impressive. And again, I've repeated it often, but it's amazing, because it's an absolute reality. It was only when you could get him to open the kit of tools and use them, and it was hard. Hard, difficult as it could be.

G: Was there anyone, say, a professional staff member on the committee that you relied on to help with Powell?

O: No, there was no one on the committee that had any control over him at all or any authority to speak for him. He had an interesting office, the lights would be down low and music in the background if you walked in. He had a lifestyle of his own.

G: (Laughter) One of the newspaper assessments of the first session of Congress stated that it was a miracle that the education bill emerged from the House committee intact. And the same article cited your efforts to get the bill through the committee. Do you recall what you did in working with different members of that Education and Labor Committee?

O: Not in any detail, as I reflect on that period. It was a basically strong committee. There were some very able people on that committee. I don't know, I never tried to analyze or evaluate that. But if you think of a couple of the people I've mentioned, and there were others. . . . The communication with the committee was constant, not necessarily with the chairman, but constant. And as far as moving the committee one-on-one and head-counting the committee and that sort of thing, that wasn't the problem. There was a lot of work involved in sensitive but very meaningful areas. The committee had quite a plateful in those years. And it was necessary to have an inordinate amount of contact with the individual members of the committee, again because of Adam. You obviously couldn't depend on Adam to maintain full contact and personally head-count his own committee; he wouldn't devote the time and attention to that. And that's why I mentioned Jim O'Hara and mentioned Hugh Carey. And there were others; if I looked at the makeup of the committee it would refresh my memory. But I think probably necessity dictated that you handle that committee even more intimately than you normally would because of the lack of communication on a regular basis with the Chairman. So, other than that, I don't think there was any-thing unique or unusual, it was just a matter of degree in terms of the effort to spring that legislation out of the committee.

G: Do you recall the issue of advancing the elementary [school] aid first and then the aid to higher education?

O: No, I don't recall it.

G: Do you recall Edith Green's position here?

O: Not really. Reflecting on Edith, the only area that was troublesome to us was Edith's position on the issue we talked about. Edith otherwise was a stalwart in this area and widely recognized as an expert in the field. I don't want to call it an aberration, it wasn't; it was the strong view she had in the one specific area. But as far as the commitment to education that we envisioned, she shared that and very strongly.

G: The strong view with regard to parochial school aid?

O: Yes, but she also had a strong view toward education, toward legislation in the field of education as long as you weren't discussing parochial school aid in that context. She was very well thought of in the field of education, too. In organized education across the country she was held in very high regard.

G: Well, I guess the teacher groups were very supportive of her, too.

O: Yes. Well, that's really where you get to the NEA.

G: You had an element of opposition from the southern conservative congressmen, the Dixiecrats, throughout the Congress on this. Did you have any strategy for making headway with them?

O: Not any overall strategy, no. Some of that was basically opposition to the program generally, and there was a continuing sort of negative or opposition aspect involving some of those fellows that over an extended period of time you kept working on. But applying it to a specific proposal such as this area, there wasn't any unusual strategy. We used to maintain our batting average with them and I'm sure you probably have noted that it became almost a statistical concentration on our part. How many were there at the beginning? How many were there as time unfolded? And there was the knowledge that you had to reduce that opposition to a certain number before you would have any comfort in terms of a majority vote, and it really was reduced to that number, utilizing everything available to us, all the things we have enumerated.

But the fact of the matter is, and I think that's worth reflecting on again, you have a President that went into office and the members of Congress were not, with rare exception, intimately acquainted with him. Granted, he had spent fourteen years in the Congress, but it was split between the House and Senate. His absenteeism in the House was well known. The senior members in the House really didn't get to know him well.

Obviously, a John McCormack knew him but not because he was a member of the House. But there were very few exceptions. And as time went on and leadership breakfast led into leadership breakfast, week after week after week, you could just see the change.

Sam Rayburn is a good example--the warm relationship that ultimately developed between those two fellows, the sharing of concerns about their physical well-being, the things that finally become subjects of conversation among people that feel comfortable with each other. Now, that's a long way from the Sam Rayburn in Los Angeles. Carl Albert right up front. The President took to Carl Albert immediately; he didn't know him well, he didn't know these people well, other than John. He knew Mansfield a little better. Obviously, he knew Hubert Humphrey more in combat than. . . . But I remember Carl Albert as an extremely impressive fellow, awfully, awfully able, and in no time at all we recognized that. The President would repeatedly say to me, "Carl Albert is such an impressive fellow." He says, "God, I'm really impressed with him." And there was nobody more supportive of Kennedy in those early troublesome days than Carl Albert.

But, you see, that's where you came from, and how do you get to a point where Carl Vinson takes a walk through the Rose Garden and then has a change of heart, and he really had been placed in that position by a fellow on his staff.I remember sitting with him after the Rose Garden visit and he pulled back that demand he had in--

G: This is the RS-70?

O: Yes. I mean that's the sort of thing that was happening every day. I keep referring to Al Thomas because of the tie-in to the visit to Texas. But these fellows became acquainted with Jack Kennedy. They really had never known him. He had three terms in the House. He was just another guy that came by once in a while--didn't hold any key position in the House. And as time went on, it was heartwarming to me to see this unfold, as he got to know these people. And that had so much to do with the progress we made. Like you say, you made a reference to some comment about my activities or the staff activities with the committee--the Labor and Education Committee. If there was any degree of success in that effort, I can tell you that I was dealing with people that liked the guy downtown; they liked him personally.

G: There's one story that I read, perhaps you can put it in context and maybe amplify it. The story goes that President Kennedy would call a southern congressman after each wrong vote and not reprimand him or upbraid him, but simply say that he understood that the congressman had to vote that way and he realized that his constituency required him to do so, et cetera. And they would talk amiably. Then one time when President Kennedy really needed the fellow's support--he was heading a subcommittee--then Kennedy called him and elicited his support and didn't get his vote, but did get him to help clear the bill by getting other members of the subcommittee to do that. Does this sound accurate?

O: Yes, it was accurate.

G: Can you tell me who it was and what the--?

O: I don't know in that instance; it could have been Mendel Rivers. But this was on a very selective basis, not a mass production sort of thing. Some of the more senior southerners were not people that were in opposition because of some deep distaste for the White House or anything like that. It was basically a reflection of constituency. And we felt there had to some day be breakthroughs with a number of these people. And on a very selective basis I would give a list to the President to make those calls.

G: These would be calls after a vote to just chat with them and get to--?

O: Yes, and in the cases where they voted against you, because you always kept looking down that road. You knew you had to break through sometime. You could sit and react adversely that day, but that wasn't going to cure anything, because there had to come a time when there could be breakthroughs. I mentioned Mendel Rivers, because Mendel Rivers had a very close and warm relationship with John McCormack. Mendel would say to me at times, "Well, in the final analysis, Larry, I'm a McCormacrat." And he liked the President. He was one of many who said, "I like that guy. I run into him, I see him down there at the White House. He invites me down, we shoot the breeze, and he doesn't push me around, or try to." And that was all the equation. You might have it reflected in a pair. You haven't gotten these fellows to the point where they're going to vote on the record in that roll call. There can be an abstention, something can happen. It wasn't an up or down "vote for me," or "if you vote against me, that's it." There were ways they could help if they had a mind to, and you had to cultivate that willingness to be helpful. And it was done in a variety of ways. The fact of the matter is that a fellow like Rivers, there were any number of others, could be of some real meaningful help and it would not be reflected in the record.

G: Yes.

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G: --perhaps a teller vote or something of this nature?

O: Sure, all kinds of things. But in the Rivers situation particularly, that was a very close friendship, he and McCormack. And it was interesting, because Mendel was a mercurial sort of fellow. But he made no bones about his admiration for John McCormack and, as time went on, he acquired a very pleasant attitude toward Jack Kennedy, too.

G: Well, I assumed that a pair was fairly automatic, that it was almost a courtesy that one member gave to another.

O: Yes, that's right, but listen, a pair, there are ways where it can work. You bring that other member into interaction in terms of an ultimate roll call. It's an intriguing parliamentary procedure. You can do an abstention--you had commitments at times to await a vote after

the second or third go-around. This was before the electronic devices and "if needed." Oftentimes the "if needed" didn't occur because we would survive without it. But if a fellow said, "I'll vote with you only if needed," then you've made some progress.

G: That's an interesting concept, because in your papers, on your little tally sheets, I saw that a lot, "if needed."

O: Yes. Now, who knows? The call went out "if needed" on occasions. On occasions it didn't. It was a gamble on the part of that member, too, who didn't want to vote with you. If the call came, and those people were all spotted on the floor, everybody knew what their role was. To hang back on roll calls, that's a usual procedure anyway. It took forty-five minutes for a roll call in those days in the House. And the fellow would step up and could make the difference. But more often than not, the need didn't arise, so the test wasn't ultimately given.

G: Was there a tendency at all to overuse that and to say to a member that his vote was needed when in fact you had a pretty good margin?

O: No. No. You would try like the devil not to overuse it, because you wouldn't try to call a fellow off the floor. This is operated out of the speaker's office. And you have the running count from the gallery and we have our people there, and then you'd call them off [the floor] and say, "It's clear that you're needed." I mean you don't use that just to position a fellow. And that was all you had a right to expect of them.

So really what you needed was a Carl Vinson or someone to persuade a couple of members on his committee to get a bill out of committee in the form we wanted; to go along while not even putting himself on the spot. Because of his position as chairman, he could get people to do that. I guess that minimum wage struggle that I discussed at some point--I don't recall whether it was here in this context or otherwise--was a prime example of working together to try to salvage a meaningful bill.

We could talk about the House almost exclusively, but the Senate was there throughout all this. But your problems in the Senate were less penetrating than in the House. So you had some elbowroom that you didn't have in the House, for one thing; the head-counting was much easier in the Senate than the House for the obvious [reason]. You had the same kind of leadership situation--intimate, close-in, mutual effort leadership in the Senate as you did in the House, with Mansfield and Humphrey and Smathers over in the Senate. You had the same kind of access and exchanges of information and all the rest of it, and you had, to some extent, the same situation where there would be the occasions when members of the Senate were not going to vote with you, that there was no way you could persuade them to, and you understood it. But there was some way somehow, and you'd sometimes suggest it. Because you didn't want to walk away empty-handed, so you'd suggest whatever might come to your mind.

So oftentimes it was a little bit of informal assistance that was hardly discernible,

but it was another grain of sand because you can't get away from it and it will carry on throughout our discussions. As I've said repeatedly--something I learned early on--there are a lot of bodies up here on the Hill, and it's awfully hard to keep track of them all, awfully hard to adequately service them in whatever way you can be of service. It's impossible to become intimately acquainted with every one of them, so you do have to determine focus as time goes on.

But in the final analysis, the substance is important and nobody is demeaning that aspect, but the difference can be the attitude toward the president reflected by assistance in some form, minuscule as it may be on occasion, because of a general atmosphere of willingness to help if it's realistic politically to do so. No one among those we dealt with regularly up there--and that was a broad-based group, both the House and Senate--had any motivation other than to try to be helpful if they could, as long as you did not become arrogant, would not try to be self-important, and that you recognized their political problems. That was overriding--that you were sensible in your dealings with them and you weren't excessive in your efforts to persuade them. All of that comes into it, and how do you put that into a procedural manual. It's dealing with people--certainly it wasn't unique with us. Every president has engaged in the same activity to some degree, but what we did was broaden it, deepen it, and formalize it, and keep him abreast of the progress we were making, one-on-one or one by one.

G: The outcome of the education measure, of course it was defeated that session, and Congress did extend aid to impacted areas and National Defense Education funds for two years. President Kennedy had wanted a one-year extension only. And he signed that measure with extreme reluctance. Can you recall that--?

O: No, but that wasn't the only measure he signed with extreme reluctance. I don't recall the specifics of it. It really didn't represent that old cliche about "Well, we had to settle for half a loaf." I think we considered this a very modest portion of the loaf to the point where you wonder whether it was worth a damn and maybe you ought to rise up on your haunches and give it to them, hit them with it. But anyway.

End of Tape 4 of 4 and Interview II

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Lawrence F. O'Brien

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Lawrence F. O'Brien of New York, New York, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on September 18, October 29, October 30, December 4, December 5, 1985; February 11, February 12, April 8, April 9, June 25, July 24, July 25, September 10, September 11, November 20, November 21, December 17, December 18, 1986; April 22, April 23, June 18, June 19, July 21, July 22, August 25, August 26, September 23, September 24, November 3, November 4, December 10, December 11, 1987 at New York, New York and Cotuit, Massachusetts and prepared for deposit jointly in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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(2) The tape recordings to which the transcripts relate shall be in the possession of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and shall not be available for use or review of or by any source during my lifetime and for a period of time thereafter ending with the 10th year anniversary of the date of my death. At such time, access to the tape recordings by researchers shall be permitted but only for the limited purpose of background use, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom under any circumstances.

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Signed by Lawrence F. O'Brien on April 5, 1990.

Accepted by Donald Wilson, Archivist of the United States, April 25, 1990.

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