

INTERVIEW II

DATE: April 17, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM G. PHILLIPS

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Phillips' office, U. S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

P: They spent a great deal of their efforts, of course, in Mississippi.

G: This is the Senate Appropriations Committee?

P: Yes, the staff.

G: Investigators?

P: Right. I can't remember all the people. Don Baker [OEO general counsel] and I had a number of meetings with the legal and investigative staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee over a period of time. I also spent a considerable amount of time with Bill Spell and Bo Statham of Senator [John] Stennis' office staff, trying to neutralize some of the more blatant things that were going on. To a lesser extent, Congressman [Jamie L.] Whitten of Mississippi also was involved. We were very influential in the delegation. He was chairman of the agriculture appropriations subcommittee.

The focal point of much of the investigative effort of the Senate Appropriations staff was directed at a very controversial Head Start grant that OEO made on a statewide basis to the Child Development Group of Mississippi [CDGM]. Because of various legal and political considerations, the CDGM grant was made through Mary Holmes Junior College, a very small junior college, with mostly enrolled blacks.

Phillips -- II -- 2

Don Baker can fill you in on the legal questions involved, but it's my understanding that the reason it was handled that way was that a statewide OEO program could be vetoed by the governor unless it was made to an educational institution. CDGM was the darling of Citizens Crusade Against Poverty [CCAP], a private lobby group that pushed OEO programs. It not only pushed the programs, but pushed some of us in ways that we were reluctant to go.

G: Dick Boone was affiliated with that, wasn't he?

P: Dick Boone, right. And Jack Conway became very much involved in CCAP after he left OEO and was particularly involved in the controversy over CDGM. Dick Boone, of course, had worked at OEO as Conway's deputy. I think he was a deputy assistant to Conway.

There was a very strong national constituency that grew up around the Mississippi CDGM programs. It was held out to be the model Head Start program for the country in terms of involvement of blacks, the poor, and in the structuring [of] the program, in the number of children served, and center operations. Goodness knows, Mississippi was one of the most poverty-stricken areas in the country and certainly there was a need for a good Head Start program.

At pretty much the same time, OEO also funded through Tufts University a medical center, an OEO health program in Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Mound Bayou is a little town on the Delta about sixty-five miles south of Memphis. It prides itself as being the oldest black community in the country. It was founded soon after the Civil War by the freed slaves of Jefferson Davis, and their ancestors still

Phillips -- II -- 3

live there. It's a small town of maybe twenty-five hundred people, in an extreme poverty area, right on the Mississippi River Delta. OEO also funded the Mound Bayou Community Hospital, which I later represented in their dealings with OEO when I had my own private consulting firm. That's another story.

OEO had put a considerable amount of money and effort into Mississippi in these various programs that I've just mentioned and other programs. The Head Start program became one of the most controversial. There were many allegations about misuse of funds, misuse of vehicles, corruption, improper educational training programs for the kids, all kinds of things.

G: Was the fact that the board was I guess unanimously black an issue?

P: No question, there were some racial overtones. I know that OEO's office of inspection did a considerable amount of investigative work on its own. When we started to get the heat from the Senate committee, our inspection people looked at it more closely. I don't know how you can make any kind of flat statement, except to say that in my judgment--and I read all the inspection reports and a lot of the other information that had been provided by the investigators from the Senate--there was some truth in some of the allegations. But I think you probably could say that there were very few programs that you couldn't go in, and if you looked hard enough, find something to criticize. It might be that the person that was keeping the books just didn't know how to keep them properly and didn't have proper receipts for all items. But we found purchase records of large

Phillips -- II -- 4

quantities of food products for luncheons and breakfasts and so forth, but no receipts. Undocumented costs might show thousands of dollars paid out but [there were] no records as to what was actually bought, accurate records that you could really document.

The pressures built up and CDGM Head Start program polarized between the opponents of OEO on the one hand, [and] people like Dick Boone and vociferous black support for the CDGM program both in the state and around the country [on the other]. Those of us who were really in the middle were extremely concerned about how many votes this growing controversy was going to cost us. At the same time we all knew that if any place had a need for a good Head Start program, it was the state of Mississippi. There were some other local programs funded by local agencies, but there was nothing to compare on the scale with the number of kids who were being served through this statewide program. The amount of the CDGM grant, as I recall, was in the range of four to five million dollars. As the controversy over the CDGM grant came to a head, it was on track with our legislative schedule. Sometime in July 1966, there was a high level meeting at OEO as to whether or not to refund CDGM for the next grant year, with all the pressures on both sides. Don Baker can add very significantly to this history because he was very much involved.

One of the people on our OEO congressional staff was Augusta Wilson, a Mississippian, who took a very strong personal interest in the program. As a matter of fact, she was a Head Start congressional liaison officer--very bright and very capable. She's now an attorney

Phillips -- II -- 5

practicing in Mobile, Alabama. She was born and raised in the Mississippi Delta region, had lived and graduated from college in the South. She had a number of good contacts in the state. While I guess you'd have to say that most were part of the establishment, they nevertheless supported OEO and particularly the Head Start program. One of these people she knew and had contact with was Hodding Carter III of Greenville, then a newspaper publisher and now the current assistant secretary of state for public affairs. Another was Owen Cooper of Yazoo City who was then the president of the Mississippi Chemical Company, and president of the Mississippi Chamber of Commerce. President Carter stayed at Cooper's home when he made his recent trip to Mississippi; he was one of Carter's earliest supporters in the mid-1970s. Another was William Winter, who is now the governor of Mississippi and who was then a state senator. There were several others. Aaron Henry of Clarksdale was the key black leader involved.

G: NAACP was his affiliation.

P: Aaron Henry was, I think, the state director of the NAACP for Mississippi.

Augusta told me that she thought that there was a viable chance that the Head Start program could be continued in Mississippi on a state-wide basis, under different auspices, if OEO decided not to renew the CDGM grant so that there would continue to be a Head Start program down there. I decided to do one of those things that you just do sometimes because you think it's the right thing--a hunch. I had some travel orders issued for myself and went down to Mississippi.

Phillips -- II -- 6

This was the middle of August 1966. I had entree to Hodding Carter and to these others through Augusta Wilson. I just told Shriver I was going to take some leave. I didn't discuss my plan with him because if it fell through, or it blew up, I didn't want him to have any responsibility for it; it would be my responsibility. In addition to that, I was afraid he would say no, because it was a tinderbox situation. It was a difficult decision. This is when the Greenville air base situation that you mentioned that came out of Harry's file was involved, was going on at the same time.

To make a long story short, I went to Greenville and met with Hodding Carter; he reacted positively, and other meetings were arranged with Owen Cooper, Bill Winter, and several other people, including Aaron Henry. Hodding was the first person I went to see. He thought that organization of a new state-wide Head Start program was a viable possibility. He picked up the phone and gave me entree to Cooper. Cooper called Winter and a couple of other people to meet with me. I made it clear to all that this was not an official OEO mission, that Shriver didn't even know I was there. I spent almost a week traveling and talking to people down there on my own. I came back to Washington with a full report and a letter from the group I had seen saying that they would like to be funded to operate a Head Start program in Mississippi if the decision was not to refund CDGM.

I then took the letter to Shriver and said, "Do you want a Head Start program in Mississippi next year that will fly?" He said, "What do you mean?" and I told him where I had spent my leave and what I had

Phillips -- II -- 7

done. It turned out that he knew several of these people, not well, but he knew who they were. He said, "I'd like to hear more about it." I then arranged to have the group come to Washington. I think there were five who came, including Aaron Henry. We met with Shriver and he saw that they were not a bunch of rednecks, but were recognized leaders seriously concerned about continuing the Head Start effort to help blacks and whites alike. They also had political contacts with the Governor's office, to help assure that a restructured program would not be vetoed.

The thing that we were concerned about was not only that there was going to be political problems, but there would be repercussions within the state that would be very serious with Governor [John Bell] Williams. The Governor's chief anti-poverty assistant was David Bowen, who's now Congressman Bowen from Mississippi. It might be interesting for you to meet with him sometime, because he could give you insights into the anti-poverty program operations from the state level. There were a number of well-conceived OEO programs going on in Mississippi that the Governor cooperated with. There was some ongoing relationship, and we didn't want to destroy it through the CDGM controversy.

Don Baker soon got involved in the legalities of the new group's grant application. Of course, they would have to have a non-profit organization chartered in order to receive a grant and submit a formal application. This was about three weeks before the CDGM grant was to finally end or be terminated. The timetable involved was tight. The

Phillips -- II -- 8

new group established a non-profit corporation in the state called Mississippi Action for Progress--MAP. Of course, CCAP and other CDGM supporters, including the CDGM board themselves, got wind of all of this within a very short time and they were outraged! You can imagine. We were accused of selling out to the white Mississippi establishment despite Aaron Henry's strong involvement in MAP. They called us every name in the book. There were nasty articles in liberal publications. I was accused of selling out the poor and being anti-black. Don Baker was, too. Shriver was also called some very choice names.

But the crucial thing was the timing. We wanted to make the MAP Head Start grant before they could take any legal action or do anything else--they were threatening a march on Washington, and all sorts of things. The decision had been made that MAP was the group that would continue the Mississippi Head Start program. It would be integrated, would meet all the guideline requirements, and language was written into the grant to make sure they met all of them. The new program would involve blacks at the appropriate percentage levels and all the local MAP Head Start programs would involve black parents. Every guideline would be met. These people on the MAP board--black and white--had real stature, they were community and state leaders who strongly wanted Head Start advantages for Mississippi kids. These were the kind of people that we were working with. It took a great deal of courage for Aaron Henry to go with this group, but he was pragmatic enough to realize that the CDGM operation was just not going

Phillips -- II -- 9

to be refunded. He wanted the black children in Mississippi to continue to benefit from Head Start and he wanted to make sure that the program could operate efficiently under auspices that he could trust and work with. He was a member of the original board of MAP.

G: When you went down there did you have the intention of forming this group?

P: No, no.

G: You had been told that such a group--

P: I was told that there were some good people down there that believed in Head Start, wanted to save it. I didn't know exactly really what was going to happen when I went to Mississippi that August. All I knew is that it was highly unlikely that we would refund CDGM under any circumstances. There were two options--you could take the state-wide program and break it up among those CAPs that were operating locally. But none of them had experience in running large Head Start programs, because CDGM virtually ran the Head Start activity for the whole state. And Head Start was not funded in very many places, if at all, as a component of another CAP. It was mostly integrated into the one state-wide program. You had a number of rural CAPs in parts of Mississippi, but they never had any experience at running a Head Start program. The other option was to try to figure a way to organize another state-wide program, a competing state-wide program. As it turned out, that was the way [it was done]. There was a compromise phase-out period for CDGM to close down its operations. MAP gradually grew over the next couple of years and became one of the most successful

Phillips -- II -- 10

Head Start programs in the country, with little controversy over its operations.

G: From where did the idea come to form the group though?

P: I guess it just kind of grew out of our discussions. I can't pinpoint a specific meeting where somebody said, "Eureka!", but it just seemed like the only logical direction to go. By the time I returned to Washington I was convinced, and I was able to help persuade Shriver that it was the best way to go--not only from a political standpoint, but in terms of program improvement.

G: I think it was the New Republic that reported that Harry McPherson had formed the group, or another White House aide perhaps. Do you recall that?

P: I remember a couple of nasty articles about us in New Republic, but I don't remember that particular report about McPherson.

G: Was there any White House involvement in the formation of that group of suggestion?

P: Well, let's put it this way, none that I know of.

G: Okay.

P: None of the people that I talked to in Mississippi mentioned that they had ever talked to anybody else about Head Start or CDGM. I was the first one down there as far as I know. I was the only one. There were times when I thought, what the hell am I doing down here, driving hundreds of miles in a rented car to see people I never even heard of three weeks ago.

G: Stennis was threatening with the appropriation bill, is that right?

Phillips -- II -- 11

P: Yes.

G: Did this development manage to mitigate that situation?

P: It did to some extent. It didn't solve all of our problems. Even though these people were not political associates of Senator Stennis or of the Stennis wing of the party, many were recognized community and state leaders of substance. I can't speak for what the Senator, how he may have reacted or anything like that. I talked to Bill Spell of his staff on many occasions and did not get a real negative [response], the kind of abuse that I used to get when I talked to him about the CDGM operation.

I started to talk about the timing and the importance of incorporation of the MAP charter and the issuance of a charter on a Friday afternoon so the Head Start grant could be promptly made early the next week. Shriver was on his way out of town, and for some reason the secretary of state's office in Mississippi, which issues charters for corporations, had had the MAP application for a week or more, had not done anything with it. It was clear if we were going to fund that program--the next Monday or Tuesday as we'd planned to do and to announce it at a press conference--we had to get the charter approved. Friday morning the MAP people called me and said, "We've tried everything we can with the Governor's office and we can't move it [the incorporation application]. We don't know what the problem is. We thought we had an agreement that he would go ahead and expedite it and sign off the political end of it. But maybe if Shriver calls the Governor, he will spring it." I didn't have a chance to talk [to

Phillips -- II -- 12

Shriver]. I knew he was leaving to go out of town that Friday afternoon and went to his office to try to get him to make the call to Governor Williams. Mary Ann Orlando, his secretary, said he had just gone down the elevator to go to the limousine to catch his plane.

I dashed down, reaching him just as he was getting into the car, and explained the situation. He said, "I'm not going to have time to make the call, but you tell Bert Harding"--who was then the deputy director--"to call Williams and tell him he's calling for me and that I would very much appreciate it if he would expedite this application and get this charter issued because we want to make the MAP grant early next week." I went upstairs and into Harding's office. I must say that our relationship was not one of the best for reasons we don't have to go into here. I told him what Shriver said--word for word. Bert was a consummate bureaucrat, coming from IRS where everything was by the numbers. In short, he refused to make the call. He said, "Shriver didn't tell me to make it." I said, "Well, he's on his way to the airport. I just left him. He asked me to relay this message to you. Here is the Governor's phone number." He said, "I won't do it unless Shriver directs me to do it personally." Well, you know, that's the kind of situation we got into sometimes at OEO.

There was only one thing to do. I went into my office and I called the Governor--fortunately I had some fairly decent relationships with his aide, David Bowen, and I had some entree. At least the Governor's office knew who I was--and explained to him as Shriver had directed that he wanted to fund the MAP Head Start program and we were

Phillips -- II -- 13

sure there had been some discussions with Dave [Bowen] about it, if not with him personally. Anyway, he agreed to sign off and the charter was issued that day, and the grant was made early the next week. The new MAP program was geared up in record time [and] began to operate with little interruption in Head Start classes.

It was really a long shot, but somehow it worked out. But the repercussions were considerable. I remember talking to Jack Conway about this, who I admired and as I indicated before I had worked with many years before. He was very unhappy with me personally, with OEO in general for having gone this route. I have really no misgivings about it at all, and if ever I had, four years later or three years later when I was in private business, my relationships in the black community were still good enough in Mississippi to get this contract to represent the Mound Bayou Community Hospital. I got them through two refunding fights which were very difficult, because that was a tough program. To this day I still maintain my contacts down there with people in that town. A couple of weeks ago the high school graduating class came up and I made the arrangements for a hotel for them up here in Washington through the wife of one of the doctors at the hospital. And the program, I think, was able to operate, and operate efficiently. It's not as though only one group could run a Head Start program. They had pioneered it, the CDGM group, and they gave it some visibility, but I never heard--and of course I left two or three months later, but in talking to George McCarthy and others who came along later--of one adverse inspection report or one allega-

Phillips -- II -- 14

tion of fraud or any kind of mismanagement of funds that came out of the MAP program.

G: Let's talk about your negotiations with Senator Stennis on this. Did you get any observations of how you felt about the program, what his objections were to the CDGM?

P: I didn't deal directly with the Senator on this issue; we dealt with Bill Spell of his office staff and others on the Appropriations Committee.

G: I see.

P: It's possible that Don Baker could shed a little more light on that. I don't believe George McCarthy was involved with Stennis either. Most of Stennis' own personal Senate activity as involved in the defense area, defense appropriations. His staff was very uptight about OEO programs, partly for political reasons. Again, to put it in the context of what was happening at that time, the civil rights movement was in a tremendous state of flux in a state like Mississippi. Violence and the threat of violence was common; if I'm not mistaken, the Jackson State riots occurred during the same period. [There was] bloodshed and people were really uptight on both sides. Woe be it to the people in the middle and the political moderates. To be a moderate in the state of Mississippi at that time--to be a Hodding Carter, or an Owen Cooper, or a Bill Winter--was not easy. They were attacked on both sides, called "nigger-lovers" by the extreme White Citizens Council-types and "honkies" by the other side. They caught hell from both extremes.

Phillips -- II -- 15

G: Was there a political consideration with regard to the CDGM's apparent links to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party?

P: No, I don't really think so. In the 1964 Democratic convention in Atlantic City when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party sent a delegation, one of the people who took up the cudgels for them was Hodding Carter. Over the next several years in terms of the development of a loyal Democratic Party in the state--as compared to the established Democratic Party--many leaders of which supported almost any Republican presidential candidate that ran during those years. But Hodding Carter and, in fact, all the MAP people I mentioned were in the forefront of the loyal national Democratic wing of the party. But this was never discussed in any of our meetings. No one ever said to me, "Does the White House approve of your being down here trying to do this?" No one asked that question. Perhaps they assumed that I wouldn't be there if it were not so; maybe that's why they didn't ask. I don't know. It never came up.

G: There's some indication that Stennis and perhaps Eastland went to the White House and talked to the President about it and expressed their grievances of the situation.

P: I wouldn't be surprised. I don't know about that. That was not reported to us.

G: Did you get any indication of presidential pressure on Sargent Shriver during this whole instance?

P: No, I didn't, but I wouldn't necessarily know if that happened. Shriver wouldn't feel it was necessary to inform me of every

Phillips -- II -- 16

conversation he might have had. If I thought it was so directly relevant to an urgent matter I was working on, he might have mentioned it. If there were such a discussion with the President about CDGM, however, I would expect him to say something to me about it. He never did. He never did. But that doesn't necessarily mean that there weren't such discussions and he just didn't feel that he wanted to share that information, which would be his prerogative.

This story that I've just told you about CDGM and how MAP was organized, only a handful of people know this even today. Of course, there were many people who were involved, but few would know the big picture. I've skipped a lot of the in-between things that happened. For example, when it was decided that MAP be the vehicle for funding, there was a very strong negative reaction on the part of the Community Action Agency Director, Ted Berry, and the Director of the Head Start program, Jule Sugarman. Jule Sugarman is a very interesting guy. I don't know if you've talked to him yet.

G: I haven't interviewed him yet.

P: He's now down at the OPM [Office of Personnel Management] in a top job. After OEO he became one of Mayor [Maynard] Jackson's top advisers in Atlanta. He was the program head or the acting head at the time of the Head Start program, and a very strong CDGM advocate, as was Ted Berry. When I got back from Mississippi and word got around OEO of what happened, there was outrage on some parts of the building. I was the enemy [to them] before I left, but now I was

Phillips -- II -- 17

really the enemy to many others. I was the chief sell-out artist to the white establishment.

G: Was this taken up at a staff meeting?

P: No, it never got there, but there were plenty of innuendos. I remember Ted Berry coming into my office literally shaking with rage one day and directing me to keep my hands out of his programs--namely CDGM. He was a fine gentleman and I guess he was then in his upper sixties. I thought he was going to try to hit me he was so angry. I tried to be respectful and disagreed with him. He was sure glad to see me leave OEO.

Berry, Sugarman, and I, and I believe Don Baker, had two meetings at the Memphis airport with the MAP coalition group after the membership of the board had been chosen. This was the most convenient location to meet. We used a room at the motel at the Memphis airport and worked out all the details of the program--the terms of the grant itself, the amount of money involved, how many centers, how many kids could be accommodated, how many staff would be hired, how they would be recruited. Every detail of the program was worked out at these meetings that went three or four hours or more each. Once Berry and Sugarman had their orders, once the decision was made, they helped implement it as good soldiers do. But they were not happy with the result.

G: Were they later pleased with the success of the program?

P: I really don't know. I left at the end of October. It was just starting to get geared up and off the ground. I think they opened a

Phillips -- II -- 18

couple of centers before I left and that was it. Once I left, I really didn't have much contact.

G: How was the staff informed of Shriver's support of this plan, the MAP plan?

P: I remember discussions about a staff meeting, but I can't recall the details. At this time we were deeply involved in our legislative fight, and we were trying to get on the House floor--this was September when this was happening, the period that we were trying to get ready for a floor fight. As I recall it was the last weekend in September when the bill passed--the twenty-sixth.

G: Do you recall anything that happened while you were down there that might tie it to a date? Any national event that was going on?

P: You mean when I was in Mississippi?

G: Yes, the first time.

P: That it was in August. I have some personal files on this. I thought someday I'd do an article about it. I do have very extensive files.

G: We'd love to copy.

P: I haven't looked at them in many years. I'd be glad to go through and see if there is [anything]. Are you coming back up?

G: Sure, sure.

P: Why don't you give me a call or drop me a note when you're going to be here and I'll make sure that we have some time to get together. Between now and then you'll have an opportunity to talk to other people who might be able to shed some additional light on it or raise some other questions that you want to ask.

Phillips -- II -- 19

G: Well now, was the Greenville air base tied into this at all?

P: No. It was going on around the same time but I can't remember. It seems to me that I was down there sometime in the second week in August, but I would still have my travel records from OEO. I did keep my personal papers, that type of thing, and I can find out for sure by looking in those files.

G: Were you involved at all in the Greenville matter?

P: No, I was not. I was just looking at the [Senator Joseph] Clark subcommittee report. The Clark subcommittee reported out \$2.246 billion total and the full committee then cut that back to \$2 billion, I believe.

G: Did Sargent Shriver delegate as much of the day-to-day running of OEO to Bernard Boutin as he did to Harding? Did he seem to rely on one more than he did the other?

P: I think you have to say he delegated more to Harding. The period when Bernie was there was one of transition when Shriver was coming over full time to OEO. The situation was not in any way similar. In many ways I guess you would have to say that when Shriver was spending parts of most days over at the Peace Corps, Boutin was really the acting director. So if you say, well, that means he was delegating the whole agency operation to him, that's one thing. But Bernie was there for such a relatively short time, that I did not really see him grab hold of many things programmatically, to get a grasp on them, to exercise that much administrative control. Harding, on the other

Phillips -- II -- 20

hand, before he was appointed to the job, he came in as a management consultant or trouble-shooter.

I spent hours with Harding telling him agency operations and from where I sat, what was wrong with the administrative management of the agency as a whole. I've never been known to be very moderate in criticizing things or people when I feel strongly about a situation. I named names: "So-and-so is a horse's ass and I don't think he knows what the hell he's doing, and for this reason. Here's what I think ought to be done here and here." I'd shoot my mouth off too much sometimes. This is partly one of the reasons why I think Harding and I never got along. I think he thought maybe I was trying to tell him how to do his job or something, I don't know.

G: But as you established yesterday, OEO was known for people who were candid.

P: Yes. I think that was one of its strengths. There were a lot of mistakes made but one of the mistakes that generally was not made was one of indecision. (Laughter) But it was an ideal way to approach something. I mean, if you're going to do it. You bring a guy in as a trouble-shooter, let him go around the agency and let people shoot their mouth off and get things off their chest and tell him what they thought was wrong. After he absorbs all of this, he becomes deputy director. This should have been a very valuable experience for him.

To be perfectly frank, I never saw really all that much that Bert Harding ever contributed to the War on Poverty. There may have been things that I'm just not aware of, but I have to this day a very

Phillips -- II -- 21

negative opinion of him as an administrator. He did not fall into the mold of the warrior, the anti-poverty warrior that some of the rest of us thought we were. He was a cold fish. I hate to say this because I've known a couple of people who worked at IRS who were not like that. But he was the typical classic, rigid bureaucrat that you would expect to find in an old-line agency like IRS. If you had met him at a cocktail party and somebody said, "Guess where I work in the government?" you'd peg him easy. He'd either have to be the Department of Commerce or the IRS. Stodgy. I don't know how else to [describe him].

G: There's been some indication that as OEO began to mature, it was having an increasingly larger percentage of its time responding to criticisms, answering congressional inquiries, answering news inquiries, answering public criticisms and local criticisms, and that this impaired its ability to do what it was organized to do.

P: No question about that. It seemed like we were always on the defensive. One of the main criticisms that everybody had about their own job was that we were spending too much time reacting to crises, rather than having time to be affirmative in your approach. To some extent, I guess, this is true with other programs in government that are of the kind of dynamic character as this. We were dealing with the most difficult socio-economic problems in the country, problems that had been generations and generations building up. To expect that it would be a nice, neat little thing to handle without criticism or without difficulty would be impossible. This is one of the reasons why OEO

Phillips -- II -- 22

attracted so many people, I guess, and still inspires the kind of positive reactions that you're getting from me and you'll get from a lot of people I know, perhaps you already have in most cases. But when you meet the ex-OEO staff people who will be in this room later today, I think you'll see that we still have a camaraderie. Somebody jokingly says, "Hell, why shouldn't we still be good friends? We were through a war together." And we were, literally. Some of those situations we found ourselves in almost seemed like a war.

G: Would you say that Sargent Shriver's time was spent too much on the side of answering criticism, on trying to get the program through Congress, on preparing responses to that?

P: I guess you could say that about everybody who worked in the program. Shriver was one of the greatest salesmen on Capitol Hill I think we've ever had. He had a knack of taking even the most vociferous critics and charming them into neutrality. He's a very effective witness before a committee. In a "one-on-one" situation, or in a small group of members he was a great lobbyist. One of the first things that we did was to sponsor a series of breakfast meetings with small groups of fifteen or twenty members. Sam Gibbons would get a dining room up here in one of the office buildings and he'd invite a number of carefully selected colleagues to come talk to Shriver about the anti-poverty program. I'd go along with him and jot down every complaint that a member had about a program. This was one way of letting members get things off their chests. This was one of the ideas I had suggested as a way to start paving the way to a comeback then in terms

Phillips -- II -- 23

of vote strength on our bill. Over a period of weeks, we had many, many of these breakfast meetings. OEO picked up the tab on them; we had a small representational allowance.

I think by and large this was a good thing. Once you exposed Shriver to a group, he was a good salesman. This was the way Peace Corps was sold on the Hill. That didn't mean that every member who talked to him would vote for our program. Of course not. But to some extent, he was able to neutralize some of the criticism and effectiveness of the opposition by this type of dialogue. These groups were very carefully selected to make sure that a majority invited was supportive of the program. But we tried to get a 60-40 or a 65-35 mix so that you would not find Shriver in a situation where ten or fifteen members were kicking the hell out of him. We wanted people there that were going to support us--a majority--and to make sure they came. All this took some doing. But I think that was one thing that helped us to get started on the way back to recovery.

Shriver himself is hard to describe. I've never seen an administrator, a government official, that I've ever worked with or observed who was anywhere like him. He's just a unique kind of a person. He didn't handle things the same way anyone else did. I must say there were many times when I disagreed with the way he handled things. But I also say that he was much more successful than he was unsuccessful, and who's going to argue with that?

He was such a meticulous person. I remember when he was scheduled to testify before the Appropriations Committee and we expected

Phillips -- II -- 24

some hostile questions. As a lot of agencies did, and I guess still do, we had a dry run. OEO staff people role play individual committee members. The staff got together and we drafted the toughest questions that we could think of to throw at Shriver. From where we sat we knew a hell of a lot more about what was wrong with certain parts of the program than a member would know, so we would have different people on the staff at one of these role sessions play the role of Senator X or Congressman Y and throw these questions at him to sharpen him up. This took place about two days before the scheduled testimony.

The night before he testified, we were still revising his testimony. He was the kind of person who was never happy with whatever the staff prepared for him. I can remember some speeches that he was going to give or testimony where we would have three or four different versions prepared, and it was then a question of which one he would like best. But he always insisted on changes. I can remember one incident. We were there working with him, revising a draft, until about one o'clock in the morning; he was supposed to testify at ten o'clock. He went home with the final draft, after all the changes had been made, retyped, everything was ready to go. We'd made arrangements to meet him at the committee prior to the testimony. I drove home and crawled into bed. It seemed like my head just hit the pillow when the phone rang. I turned the light on and looked at the clock. My wife said, "Who's calling at this hour?" It was quarter to four in the morning! It was Shriver. He said, "I hate to bother you, but I've been rereading page 8 of my testimony for tomorrow--" I said,

Phillips -- II -- 25

"You mean today, Sarge." He said, "Yeah, today. We've got to rewrite this paragraph. I don't like it." That's the kind of person he was. So I had to go down to the office early instead of meeting him at the committee. I had called my secretaries to come in early, seven o'clock in the morning, and we redrafted the paragraph. This is the way he was.

G: Was this a frequent occurrence, the middle of the night work?

P: Yes. He was the most demanding person I ever worked for. He had the reputation of burning out his staff. That was one of the reasons I had told him when I agreed to come to OEO, "I'll use all my chips in one session if we're successful and that's it. That's my contract." I knew what his reputation was and I figured physically that one year was to be it. It was during this period in 1966 that my doctor diagnosed my hypertension, which I still have today. That's when I got it. Fortunately, it was diagnosed very early and it didn't result in any serious physical harm. But I didn't want to work there any longer.

G: Did you notice any decline of White House support for OEO during the year you were there?

P: A falling off?

G: Yes.

P: Well, I guess there's always a [fluctuation]. It's like the stock market. Some days I think were more difficult. We had good days and bad days. I think I'd have to say no, because the only way to measure

Phillips -- II -- 26

it is what the vote was, and the overall high level of support, and the level of funding we were able to get.

G: There was also criticisms that OEO was lobbying too much.

P: I'm sure that's true.

G: And some of the members of Congress, particularly the opposition, objected to the amount of lobbying.

P: Of course, you know, lobbying is not an easy job. I've done a lot of it professionally, after and before OEO. I don't think anybody lobbies just for the fun of lobbying. It's not an easy job despite everything you might read about the high salaries that people get, which is greatly overblown. But if there had not been some very intensive lobbying done during the period, the outcome might have been different. It was necessary.

I might say that the opposition was not [unorganized]. I've never seen a more organized or more intense effort to defeat a program than what they threw at us in 1966. Quie, Goodell, the whole Republican policy task force, they had a staff that worked exclusively on this. This is an interesting little story--they had a very bright person named Pat Goldman on their staff. Pat was a staff member on this Republican task force. I'm not sure if she was paid by the Education and Labor Committee minority, or whether she was on the staff of the Republican Policy Group during this period. But she wrote and kind of researched most of the stuff that Quie, Goodell, and other members used against us.

Phillips -- II -- 27

There was another fellow named John Buckley who was an investigator on the payroll of the Education and Labor Committee staff. Buckley also spent considerable time investigating CDGM, as well as the Senate staff people, and also on other OEO programs. John Buckley later surfaced during the Watergate investigation as being one of the go-betweens for the break-in artists. He testified before the Ervin committee. That was the same Buckley. They call him "Fat Jack." That was the same guy the Republicans had assigned to investigate the anti-poverty program in 1966.

One day we found Pat Goldman going through the OEO files in one of our program offices. She just walked into the office; nobody knew who she was. She was going through our files and picking out documents and xeroxing them. Somebody said, "You're new here, aren't you?" and somehow we suddenly realized what she was doing and who she was. We threw her out, but that's the kind of thing they were doing to try to destroy the anti-poverty program. Fat Jack was a shrewd guy, an old classic gumshoe. They came up with dirt because there was dirt there, no question about it. Pat Goldman later became the head of the women's caucus at the Republican convention in 1972 and 1976, too, and was just recently appointed by President Carter as a Republican member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

G: Did you set up a special office down here to work with congressmen when you were trying to round up the votes?

P: We worked out of friendly offices. Sam Gibbons' office was one that we used. We were kind of persona non grata, as I told you, in the

Phillips -- II -- 28

House committee office itself. Normally, if there's a harmonious working relationship between the department or agency lobbyist and the committee, he'll always work with the committee office. There are people probably here today who we work with who come in and use our phones, or hang their hat, have a cup of coffee, and come back. This is a common practice. But then we really didn't have much of a base, except during the time when the bill was on the floor when the Speaker did make available a room for our staff and telephones where we could be in communication with OEO people downtown; it was our command post. We also had members who supported the OEO program on the floor, working to line up votes. The House whip and DSG whip operations would report shifts in positions so we could keep our list current.

One of the most important things also was the attendance: we had to make sure that when a key amendment came up, we were able to have our supporting members there on the floor. The Democratic leadership's whip system, and the Democratic Study Group's whip system--which I was able to mobilize because of my past relationships--were important. Of course, that was just during the period of time when the bill was on the House floor.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of William G. Phillips

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, William G. Phillips of Washington, D.C. 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 April 16 and 17, 1980 in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and the tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

William G. Phillips
Donor

2/28/85
Date

Robert M. Har
Archivist of the United States

March 18, 1985
Date