INTERVIEW XIV

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INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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Tape 1 of 2

R: No, [inaudible] I have not actually looked over those papers, so I may have to look at yours to refresh my recollections.

G: LBJ moved into that new office, the Capitol office, P-38. Let me ask you to just describe it and the circumstances around his acquiring that office.

R: I'm not too sure of the circumstances under which he acquired it, but it was a marvelous office. It was on the Senate floor for one thing, and his previous office of course had been up in the gallery floor. But it had a marvelous corner view out of the Senate wing of the Capitol. There was a really spacious reception room, and when I say spacious I mean extraordinarily spacious office, big enough for a rather large table at which he could have meetings or have lunch. He quite often ate lunch there.

I'd say that it really marked a sort of an upgrading in the various perquisites available to the floor leader of the Senate, to the majority leader. He had different people staffing it at different times. Ashton Gonella, as a general rule, was in the outer office, and I think Mary Margaret [Wiley Valenti] was in the inner office with

him. And there were usually two other persons in the office, one other secretary to sort of handle relief and various typing chores, and that varied so much that I can't remember one single person, but then usually an aide, so to speak.

G: Who would that be?

R: Oh, Ruth--what was her name?

G: Schumm?

R: Schumm, Ruth Schumm, for instance, somebody like that.

G: Did the office's proximity to the Senate floor help him in getting away from the floor to talk to other senators?

R: Not really, because there was no inconvenience in going up to the third floor. It was just not as good an office.

G: Did he stay in this office most of the time, or did he balance it between his other offices?

R: I don't think he ever saw his other offices after that.

G: Really?

R: Yes.

G: Did the staff members have an impression of the office that they--were they positive about it or negative about it? For instance, I've heard it referred to as the Taj Mahal.

R: Not a bad description. I think everybody was intrigued by it, let me put it that way. You know, we were all accustomed to LBJ being rather flamboyant although not admitting it himself. I've never known in my whole life a man who made so many protestations of modesty and so many

acts of flamboyancy. It was just sort of an amusing thing, I think, on the part of the staff.

G: What was his characterization of the office, do you--?

R: I never heard him characterize it.

G: Okay. Now, early that year Castro assumes power in Cuba. Let me just ask you about that transition with regard to your own work and LBJ's attitude toward it.

R: In what sense?

G: Well, was it one of alarm? Did you have constituents who had interests in Cuba that--?

G: Oh, yes, we had constituents who had interests in Cuba. I wouldn't say it was one of alarm, because in a sense Cuba didn't seem to have much relationship to us. The principal constituent was the King Ranch which had a tremendous amount of land in Cuba, all of which got expropiated. And we had quite a bit of contact with the King Ranch and tried to work out something through the State Department, which, of course, was very, very difficult because we had no representation to Cuba. I wouldn't say, though, that Castro's coming to power otherwise made any particular difference in our situation except insofar as it made a difference in the world situation. Obviously there was a shift in the balance of power with an actual communist nation in the western hemisphere. At that point Castro had not admitted that he was a Marxist; he admitted that later on, but it was quite obvious to anyone.

G: Another international issue that was perhaps more significant to you was the problem of Berlin and Khrushchev's announcement that he was going to open some direct talks with East Germany. That had implications on--

R: Well, those were problems, but they were problems only in the sense that they were shifts in the world's balance of power. In terms of the Lyndon Johnson operation, they didn't change anything. It's just there was another problem to deal with in terms of what came before the Senate. Now, strangely enough, there is very little legislation affecting international affairs that comes before the Senate, very little. We have the State Department bill, the foreign aid bill, we have the approvals of treaties and the approvals of diplomatic appointments, and that is about it, except to the extent that the president will consult with members of Congress and will try to get various expressions of support out of them on key occasions. And there was not anything in the activity over Berlin that led to any difference whatsoever in the conduct of the office. There was quite a bit later when he was vice president, yes, but not at that particular time.

G: The Democrats had as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee Theodore Green who was, I guess, in his early nineties at this point.

R: Easily.

G: It seems that early, even before Congress actually convened, LBJ had discussions with Green about the possibility of his resigning the chairmanship.

G: As soon as Congress convened you had the annual major battle over Rule 22.

R: Oh, God! That is one of the most stupid battles that has ever been waged in the halls of Congress. And the only reason that the thing survived at all is that so many members of Congress are lawyers, and they are under the impression that parliamentary law is the same as court law, which it is not. The concept is utterly ridiculous, the idea that if the Senate acts before it acts any other way it can change its rules and bypass any form of filibuster. It really shows a lack of knowledge of parliamentary procedure, which may sound rather strange, but both the Senate and the House get by primarily upon the skill of the parliamentary clerks. In the House there were only three men outside of the clerk that really knew the rules; that was John Rankin, Viro Marcantonio and Clarence Cannon, who wrote most of them. In the Senate I think Dick Russell was about the only man that really knew the rules and knew them thoroughly.

But what's more important is the philosophy. Let me explain that one, because it's one of the things that hangs around. They opened up with this rather silly argument as to whether the Senate is or is not a continuing body, and the answer to that is for some purposes it is a continuing body, for other purposes it is not. But since for some purposes it is not a continuing body, their contention was that the old rules did not apply at the opening of the session but would apply if they were resorted to at any point, and that therefore there was an interval between the opening of the session and the first act of

the session in which they could go ahead and change the rules by a majority vote.

Now, the deceptive part of that is, yes, they can go ahead and change the rules by a majority vote; in fact, they can change the rules by a majority vote any time they want to, any day of the week, any week that the Senate's in session. Any month that the Senate's in session the rules can be changed by a majority vote. And this is a beautiful example of what semantics can do to one, because that's not the issue. The issue is whether you can shut people up by a majority vote, that's a different thing altogether. You see, they use that shorthand so quickly, that the rules can be changed by a majority vote, implying that otherwise they can't, that it slides over the fact that the real issue is shutting men up.

Now, if you will follow their reasoning perfectly, let's assume that the Senate has no rules at the beginning. Well, suppose those men just go on talking, how are you going to stop them? [Are] you going to send the sergeant-at-arms after them with a mace? The sergeant-at-arms can't act without an order of the Senate, and suppose the filibusterers won't shut up in order to permit an order of the Senate to be voted. The thing is an absolute quatsch. But again there are so many lawyers in the Senate, they are under the impression that in a case like this, the vice president, acting in the capacity of a judge, can exercise the same powers that a judge can exercise in order to keep order in his court. Well, the vice president's not a judge, he has no authority whatsoever. The vice president is nothing

but a presiding officer. And the rules that he makes are all subject to challenge, and he has no way of disciplining members who violate his orders except by getting an order of the Senate to discipline those members. It's a catch-22 thing. It just goes round and round and round. And I think that some of the members of the civil rights clearinghouse who were organizing this thing must have realized that it was utter nonsense, but that they were using it in order to make some propaganda for their cause.

The best way to look at it is to think of what happened in the first day that the Senate met back in 1789, met without rules. What would they have to do? They'd have to come up with a set of rules, and of course the only way they could do it would be to agree upon rules, and if somebody wanted to filibuster at that point there was no way of stopping them because you have to have a rule to stop a filibuster. That always annoyed the devil out of me to have to go through that bit of idiotic nonsense over absolutely nothing.

G: Now, LBJ did offer a motion to change the rules to two-thirds of those senators present and voting rather than the previous two-thirds of the body as a whole.

R: A constitutional two-thirds, it's known as.

G: Do you recall that?

R: Oh, I recall it very well. Again, there's some history to that that has to be taken into account. At one point the Senate had actually operated on the basis of two-thirds present and voting rather than a constitutional two-thirds. So casting around desperately for some

filibuster maneuver, the southerners suddenly realized that the filibuster rule only applied to a bill, [it] did not apply to a motion to take up the bill. So what they did the next time was to filibuster not the bill but the motion to take up the bill. Now, I think if the vice president at that point had ruled them out of order, he could have gotten away with that. That's one area where the vice president could have exercised some authority, but he didn't. And so what we had was a rule which permitted a constitutional two-thirds, of two-thirds present and voting, but also applied to taking up the rule, but also did not apply to a motion to consider the bill. What you have to look carefully, what LBJ was trying to do was to get back to cover the motion to take up a bill as well as the bill itself. It was a very complex parliamentary question.

G: The liberals even challenged Johnson's effort to adjourn the Senate and called for a roll call vote on the adjournment. Do you remember that?

R: I don't remember it particularly. It was just one of the maneuvers that went on, a rather silly maneuver.

G: He received a large vote in favor of his adjournment motion.

R: Of course, because there was no sense in staying in session. Whenever people get into the rules, they invariably get into a nonsensical argument, because again so few of them understand the rules. They may know the rules, but understanding them is somewhat different.

G: You had some changes in the Republican Party. [Everett] Dirksen replaced [William] Knowland, defeating John Sherman Cooper for the

post, and [Charles] Halleck defeated [Joseph] Martin. Let me ask you how these changes affected Johnson and his role.

R: Well, of course, the change that affected him the most was Dirksen for Knowland. And what that meant was a totally different type of personality with whom he was dealing. Knowland was very much a two-plus-two-equal-four type of man. His concept of the leadership was that he was supposed to put up a banner around which all good and true men would repair. And on those occasions in which he had to oppose President Eisenhower or something, he would deliberately leave the leader's seat and go to the back of the chamber and take some desk there to make his speech opposing Eisenhower. The man was very rigid. Russell once said of him that he walks like he thinks, or he thinks like he walks. And if you ever saw him walk, there was a kind of boom, boom, boom, boom, boom effect to it. An awful nice guy, really, and kind of shy. I liked him. But again a straight-line thinker. In his mind two plus two would always equal four. An indifferent speaker.

Dirksen, on the other hand, was a very good speaker, somewhat oleaginous, but still very, very good. What was more important, Dirksen had a very subtle mind. Dirksen was probably the most--no, not the most effective. The most effective Republican Senate leader I ever knew was Charlie McNary. But after Charlie McNary, Dirksen was certainly the most effective of the Senate Republican leaders. He understood Johnson, and Johnson understood him. There's no doubt in my mind whatsoever that those men started to play things very cozy with each other.

G: Why was Dirksen effective?

R: Because of the same reasons that Johnson was effective, that he did not regard the leadership post as one that shot up rockets. He regarded the leadership post as one in which the leader was supposed to be constantly at work making the necessary compromises and the necessary adjustments that got bills through. And I strongly suspect--now again I must stress that this is only a suspicion, only a suspicion--but I strongly suspect that Dirksen and Johnson would quite frequently plot a thing, or script a debate. I'll never forget one of the civil rights debates, and I've forgotten which one, where Dirksen started out with--this was after Johnson became president, that's right. Dirksen started out with all sorts of apprehensions and worries, et cetera, about the thing, and then all of a sudden at the last minute he decided he had to vote for it, which of course was the most effective thing he possibly could have done. He was a shrewd customer, was Everett.

G: Was there any significant philosophical difference between Knowland and Dirksen?

R: Oh, yes. Knowland was a conservative of very, very deep convictions, not as conservative as Barry Goldwater, no. In fact, in some respects it would be possible to refer to Knowland as a liberal. But what Knowland believed in, he believed in. He wore his principles on his sleeve, but he lived by them, too. There was absolutely no give to him, absolutely no capacity to adjust himself, whereas Dirksen was an extraordinarily pragmatic man.

When I first knew Dirksen, he was a liberal. My father had known him for many years. I didn't get to know Dirksen until I covered the House shortly after World War II. In those days he was a liberal. What developed, he could never get out of the House as a liberal. He represented a very strange district in southern Illinois. He himself was from Peoria, and that district was rather liberal in Republican terms. But the Republican Party in the state was controlled by Colonel [Robert R.] McCormick of the Chicago Tribune. By God, you weren't going to get the statewide Republican nomination unless you were kosher with Colonel McCormick, and Dirksen wasn't. Well, Dirksen just dropped out of sight for a couple of years. He announced that his doctor had told him he was going blind and he thought it wasn't fair to his constituents to be represented by a blind man in the House. Well, three or four years later then after that, he announced that a miracle had taken place and that his sight had been fully restored. He started going around from one Republican banquet to another and making the most right-wing speeches I have ever heard in my life. God, they were right-wing! And the Colonel was just delighted, and that's how Dirksen became senator. Now, again, I am not going to state that the man deliberately faked the blindness or anything like that. But it is obvious that it was just as easy for him to be a conservative as it was for him to be a liberal.

G: Vance Trimble did a story on the nepotism in congressional offices, in Senate offices, and one of the items that they homed in on was the

fact that Sam Houston [Johnson] and his wife were on LBJ's payroll. Was this a concern to LBJ, was this a problem?

R: Oh, the story was a problem, I assume, and I think a rather silly one. I myself have never had any sympathy for these crusades against nepotism in the Senate. I think they are based upon a total misconstruction of the Senate. The Senate's a political body, and political leaders must have people around them that they can trust. And you'll find that the so-called nepotism is not nepotism in the normal sense, in the sense of giving somebody jobs. It's fundamentally getting somebody that they can trust in a key position. I can give you all sorts of examples of people whose--for instance, Irving Ives' wife ran his office for him, and she ran it. She earned every cent that she made. And who else? There was a senator from Minnesota, I remember his wife ran his office. What it really amounts to is that they want people in a key position that they can trust, and this whole nepotism thing is based upon the assumption that they are dealing with executive agencies. I think in executive agencies it could be a serious problem, but how in the devil can it be a problem in the Senate? What the people do in effect is to hire a senator, and how he wants to get his staff together, that's his business.

G: Well, was Sam Houston in 1959 performing a useful or valued role in the office?

R: I don't know if he was performing it in 1959. He had performed on many occasions a very useful role in the office.

G: Which was--?

R: He would sit out in front and talk to Texans as they came in, and almost everybody in Texas knew and liked Sam Houston. He gave his brother invaluable political advice. There were many, many ways, you know, [in which] Sam Houston was much smarter than his brother, and certainly I think much smarter when it came to Texas politics. His wife, Mary, had been a secretary who had worked in the office many years, a very good secretary, one of the best we ever had. She earned her pay, there's no question about that.

Now, the strange thing, though, I cannot remember whether Sam was actually in the office in 1959. I just don't remember.

G: This was the year he was hospitalized, later in the year--

R: He may have been in the office, I don't know. But I do know that when he was in the office, he worked.

G: Okay.

R: Do you have anything else on it, by the way?

(Interruption)

G: --civil rights legislation.

R: Right. Let's talk about it overall, not just 1959, I think you'd better put 1959 and 1960 together, because what happened in effect was that what started in 1959 wasn't finished until 1960.

The whole thing was very poorly thought through. Something had to be done for the simple reason that the 1957 bill admittedly had some defects in it and the basic Johnson theory, which I think is a correct theory, was that the important thing was to get a bill through and then later one could improve upon it. That was great, but then

something had to be done, at least with an election coming up, to demonstrate that some efforts were being made to improve upon it. About that time he became sort of disinterested in the Senate. I think that he was merely going through the motions in both 1959 and 1960. I have a very strong feeling that he would not have filed for re-election in 1960 if it hadn't been for the Democratic convention and his nomination to the vice presidency.

But politics began to fade from his mind, politics and government, and he did not lay a firm enough basis for a civil rights bill in 1959. Now, there were a number of reasons for that. First of all, there really were no big issues involved. See, in the 1957 bill there were some big issues within the overriding civil rights issue itself. There was the question of the jury trial, there was the question of Title III, both of which meant that if one could work out a compromise on those big issues, it was possible to get an overall bill. But for some reason it's much more difficult to work out compromises on minor issues, and almost everything in the civil rights bill of 1959 and 1960 was minor. My proposal for a conciliation service was just an effort to have something in there that would have some major impact, that would be a new direction. Things had to change. You notice in that memo I make the point that--let's see, where are those words? "The United States has reached the stage where some new directions are required in thinking on civil rights. Up to this point practically all the proposals have been designed to punish those who seek to deprive others of the enjoyment of their rights."

Now, that's a little bit pompous on my part, but pompous openings usually attracted his attention. But the main point that I was trying to make here was that there was nothing that could be done in the sense of patching up the 1957 bill that wasn't minor and technical, and I knew you could not get a bill passed when there was nothing in it but technicalities. You had to have some new change. And also I think that the idea that I have here is also valid, that you aren't doing anything if you pass laws to protect people's rights when they don't have any rights to protect, which was just about the situation with the blacks. So therefore what we had really done in 1957 was a major struggle over voting rights, and there you had some big enough issues that one could work out compromises. But there really wasn't anything like that in 1959, nothing. All the little stuff that you see that would give the Justice Department power to look into the voting records, to strengthen the section so the FBI can investigate bombing, they were all meritorious positions, but really not great, big, flaming principles.

I frankly don't believe that Johnson ever grasped this particular point, mostly because I doubt if he was very much interested. I don't mean that he was uninterested in civil rights, but I don't think he was very much interested in being the Senate leader that year. Consequently what was dumped onto the Senate floor was a series of rather complex technicalities which nobody understood clearly. And because he never fathomed the purposes of the federal conciliation service that I had proposed, it was never stated clearly enough to become a

reasonably dramatic issue. I remember I had made one appearance before the civil rights clearinghouse on it, and again there were too many lawyers there and they were accustomed to conciliation in the legal sense. In most labor law, conciliation is a substitute for action, and I think maybe I had made a mistake by calling it the conciliation service in the first place. But I didn't want to call it the mediation service because that would have scared all the southerners off right away. A mediator, you know, makes recommendations; a conciliator makes no recommendations, he just tries to bring people together.

But Johnson again didn't understand it well enough, and the result was that it never became the serious issue that might have been something upon which one could hang one's hat. So people just sort of grumbled about this all through 1960 without coming to grips with it. The only thing that was done was the extension of the Civil Rights Commission, and that was done by a rider in an appropriation bill if I remember correctly. That is 1959.

So we get into 1960, and this time they dumped the bill out on the floor. And it was a mess, it was a mess. I'm not quite sure just why it was that way because about that time due to some office politics I got shunted over to the Senate Office Building and [was] too far away to follow the debate on a day-by-day basis, which is what you really need when you're doing the kind of work I was doing. By the time I got back, things were really messy. In fact, in my judgment

the bill that was finally passed really wasn't worth passing except that one had to have a bill after all that sturm und drang.

G: Why did LBJ introduce the bill in the first place?

R: First of all, the liberals of course had a bill that was described as extreme, I've forgotten its provisions. But it doesn't matter, it would be extreme because on this issue they wanted all or nothing. And there was an Eisenhower bill which--and at this particular point Johnson did not want action patching up the 1957 bill to be solely on the initiative of a Republican president. Had to have a Democratic stamp on it in his judgment. And that's why he introduced the bill.

G: There was one difference between his bill and Eisenhower's. I guess there was several, but one in particular had to do with desegregation. You had in the Johnson bill your federal conciliation service, and in Eisenhower's bill you had a provision for technical assistance and financial assistance, I guess, to schools that were desegregated.

R: Yes. Incidentally, conciliation service did not just apply to schools.

G: Oh, I see.

R: It applied to all. The typical example that I gave is that suppose you do get a court order against segregation on the buses. All right, segregation on the buses then becomes illegal, but what in the hell is integration? Does integration on the bus mean that the first seat has to be white, the second seat black, the third seat white, the fourth seat black, or does integration mean that every seat in the bus must have one black and one white? Are you going to have the blacks up

front and the whites in the back? In other words, segregation is easy to recognize, but how in the hell do you recognize integration? And that's what the conciliation service was supposed to do, help people work out some reasonable method of going along with the court order.

The Johnson bill was somewhat broader for that reason. The Eisenhower bill almost entirely applied to the schools.

G: One of your memoranda here seems to suggest that the civil rights groups and individuals were reasonably supportive of Johnson's bill in private at least.

R: Right.

G: Let me ask you to elaborate on that in your discussions with them.

R: Well, there was an organization--not an organization precisely but there was what was known as the civil rights clearinghouse. That was composed of quite a few people. AFL-CIO was in on it, the NAACP, the Urban League, almost everybody in Washington that was anybody and for civil rights was in on it. Now, of course in that kind of a group, seeing that the major issue involved black integration, the NAACP had the most clout. But nevertheless--oh, the American Jewish Committee, I'd forgotten that one. And I appeared before a meeting of them to explain the Johnson bill, and the memorandum that you have there is pretty much the various reactions that I was getting. They were rather interesting. Of course, Clarence Mitchell of the NAACP [was] the only man that really came all out flat solid against Johnson, but nevertheless he was a very good friend of mine. Clarence and I were

good friends. The others, [Hyman] Bookbinder was representing the AFL-CIO at that meeting, he was rather favorable to the Johnson proposal.

G: This civil rights measure coming in 1959, what, four years after the second Brown [v. Board of Education] decision mandating desegregation with all deliberate speed, and yet desegregation had not happened; it hadn't taken place. Why didn't the measure deal with desegregation and attempt to put some teeth into the Supreme Court's decision?

R: For the reasons I outlined in that memorandum. There had to be some positive steps toward integration. See, up to that point everybody was thinking solely in terms of forbidding segregation, but even if segregation is totally and completely outlawed, that doesn't mean you have achieved integration, because you still have all of the habits, all of the issues of cultural lag, et cetera. And at that particular point, it was very obvious to almost everybody that no great, big sweeping changes were going to occur in the school situation. That was going to have to be a matter of court order. And to try to pass some legislation on it was just hopeless. Nothing could have been done. You know, the southerners still controlled the power to block anything that would look to a nonsoutherner as though it were unreasonable. I think to many of the nonsoutherners, mostly in the West, it would have looked unreasonable to have tried to push the school segregation at that point.

The major civil rights issue--also, we were trying to, we wanted to focus on voting more than anything else. There was one absolute

tenet of faith with Johnson, and that was that if you had the right to vote, you could get everything else you wanted.

G: Now, you've mentioned that Johnson did not seem to be enthusiastic about politics or about the Senate. How was this manifest? Did he not come in?

R: Sloppiness. No, he came down every time, but sloppiness, carelessness, not touching all the bases, not the keen, alert type of operation that we had expected, that we had become accustomed to.

G: Do you think any of it was due to the fact that you did have a large majority rather than a slender difference in the number of--?

R: Well, that gave him some troubles, there's no doubt about that. It's always troublesome to have a large majority. But I think that was a problem he could have solved if he had had the real will to solve it.

G: With all these new senators, you did have a lot of committee assignments, and there has been the suggestion that some of the committee assignments were made on the basis of that Rule 22 fight, that there were some reprisals against senators who had opposed him on that and that there were some rewards, that a lot of the freshmen who went along with the leadership were [rewarded].

R: No, no. He may have rewarded--he would reward of course and he would punish possibly, but not that. That's a little fanciful. I'm afraid that sort of thing arises--people are always looking for some hidden key to the way Johnson ran the Senate. They are always coming up with the idea of arm-twisting, which is pretty ridiculous. Of course granting of favors or withholding of favors, that's not so ridiculous.

But there wasn't quite as much of that as one would think. As a general rule, one of the best ways to get something out of Johnson was to oppose him, because then you could usually expect to get something in an effort to bring you back into camp. But I'm confident that there was no use of the committee assignments as reward or punishment.

G: Edmund Muskie seems to feel that he was slighted, received only his fourth choice, and he tied it to the [Rule] 22 [fight]. Any insights on why Muskie was not appointed?

R: Ed Muskie is a very sensitive man, very sensitive. He is a person who can see slights where nobody else can see them.

G: Muskie had Banking and Currency, Government Operations, and Public Works.

R: Which are not bad committees.

G: Now, several freshmen did receive some choice appointments, like Robert Byrd, Thomas Dodd, Gale McGee on Appropriations; Clair Engle, [E. L. Bob] Bartlett, and [Howard] Cannon on Armed Services. Any significance to these appointments?

R: That's just Johnson policy. Johnson made a fetish out of demonstrating the fact that while he had not broken the old rule of seniority, he had bent it enough that young men would get decent assignments. You know, at one time if you were a freshmen in the Senate, you were lucky if they put you on the Committee on Capitol Domes, Roofs and Skylights, or the Committee on the Disposition of Useless Executive Papers. It was ridiculous.

G: [William] Proxmire had applied for the Finance Committee and that was not granted. Of course, I want you to go into the Proxmire thing at some length in a minute, but any insights on this particular matter?

R: He was shooting too high, that was all. That's one of the most difficult committees of the Senate to get on, everybody wants it. I think he got some other committee, though, that he really wanted. What was it?

G: Let's see. He got Agriculture, that should have been--

R: And how! What else did he get?

G: Banking and Currency.

R: Oh, my God! Agriculture and Banking and Currency, that's made to order for a Wisconsin senator. That's choice.

G: Let's get into the whole question of the growth of opposition to LBJ's leadership. Proxmire made three speeches on the floor decrying the concentration of power and calling for more Senate caucuses. (Interruption)

R: First of all, you must realize that Bill Proxmire is a contentious man who loves to battle for the sake of battling. You ought to talk to Ralph Huitt about it. Ralph Huitt worked for him for a while. I remember Ralph telling me how he'd watch Proxmire whenever an argument would start on the floor of the Senate. He could see Proxmire just itching to get into it, even if it had nothing to do with him or nothing to do with Wisconsin. Furthermore, Gaylord Nelson once showed me a set of very interesting statistics which seemed to demonstrate that the same people who had elected Bob LaFollette elected Joe

McCarthy; the same people who elected Joe McCarthy elected Bill Proxmire. Not because Proxmire and McCarthy agreed; they didn't. It was simply because of the old Wisconsin tradition of hell-raisers. They love hell-raisers in this state. Almost invariably one of the senators is going to be a hell-raiser.

Now, when Proxmire first came to the Senate, Johnson just smothered him with love and affection, obviously in an effort to rope him into the corral. Inside of one day he'd gotten him on a couple of very choice committees--and Banking and Currency and Agriculture are both choice for Wisconsin--and got him appointed to some sort of ceremonial committee to go to Germany. It is pretty hard to beat that for a senator from Wisconsin. At everybody's surprise, he responded at a later point--I've forgotten exactly what the intervals were--with this attack upon Johnson for not calling caucuses. Now, again, what one is getting into here is egregious nonsense, some of which is best illustrated by one of the speeches that Proxmire made. He made one speech in which he quoted LaFollette, the elder, as railing at the power in the Senate that was overriding the dictates of will of the individual senators. And of course this was supposed to be directed at Johnson. Now, somebody--I've forgotten whom--went and looked up the original LaFollette speech, and it turned out that the dictator he was talking about were the Democratic Party caucuses. You see, in those days the caucuses had binding power.

But Proxmire somehow had the idea that there was something called party policy in the Senate, and that party policy should be made by

some democratic means. Now, the trouble with the whole argument, of course, is there is no such thing as party policy in the Senate. The only way senators speak is through their votes. The closest you can come to saying this is Democratic Party policy is to find out how the majority of the Democrats voted in most of the major issues. But you don't make policy just by making speeches about it or by writing position papers.

Now, it's true Johnson did not want to call caucuses, very definitely did not want to call caucuses. Not because they might make policy. No way in the world they could make policy. But simply because it's almost impossible to call a caucus without getting into a big fight. One of Johnson's objectives was to give the appearance of unity to the Democratic Party at any and all times. So when Proxmire started out this nonsense about Johnson being a dictator and the way to handle it was to set up the caucuses, I think that Prox did scare up some opposition to Johnson. People were a little tired of the way Johnson was running the Senate. He was, he was running it from top to bottom, but it wasn't through arm-twisting or anything like that, although some may have been involved. It was simply because he understood the Senate. The whole trick to operating the Senate is to set up the issues in such a way as to command a majority. You can take the same issue, set it up one way, it's going to be defeated. Rejigger it a little bit to set it up a different way, it's going to be passed. Because it's just a question of putting certain blocks together. And even if somebody had stood up and said, "Well, Prox,

I'm going to give you exactly what you want. Now, what do you want?" and he had been allowed to write a new form of organization for the Senate, it would not have made the slightest difference, would not have gained him anything that he wanted. You'd have to go much further and you'd have to change the Constitution itself to do that.

G: Well, Proxmire criticized the fact that there was not a party program--

R: Of course, and there can't be.

G: --but Johnson had several years before come out with his thirteen-point Democratic Party policy, "the program with a heart."

R: The old Lake Whitney [speech].

G: Wasn't that in effect the same thing that Proxmire later called for?

R: No, no. What Proxmire was calling for, you couldn't get. Proxmire was calling for party policy, and there's simply no way in the world the Democrats in the Senate, or the Republicans in the Senate, can establish party policy. You can't do it.

G: Another criticism that Proxmire leveled against Johnson was that the leadership did not take a position, that Johnson himself would not express himself early enough, often enough. He expressed the opinion that had Johnson been willing to take a position publicly that at least other senators would have had a better idea of what to support or what not to support.

R: He's right in the first part of it, that Johnson never took a position until the very last minute. That's correct. But the idea that anything Johnson would say would give other senators the idea what to support or what not to support, that's childish. That is literally

childish. Senators are going to vote on the basis of a combination of their constituencies, their philosophy, and how they think at any given moment. It's got nothing to do with what the leader thinks or says.

G: Well, why didn't Johnson stake a position earlier?

R: Because if he took a position, it detracted from his bargaining power. You see, what Johnson was really doing here was intervening in all these various disputes and talking people into getting together, which he could do easily enough because he hadn't taken a position. But if he had taken a position on a bill, everybody would have suspected any efforts that he was making to find some middle ground. They would have regarded it as just his efforts to promote by some subtlety whatever the stand was that he had taken in public. So as a consequence he just didn't take public stands.

G: Critics, of course, have construed this to translate to the thesis that Johnson didn't have any position at all, that he had no philosophy, that he had no beliefs.

R: That's a very unfair criticism. I know it, that's a very unfair criticism, because again it is based upon a misunderstanding of the Senate. They regard the Senate as a sort of a coopers' union debating forum. It's not. The truth is I think many of Johnson's positions were quite shallow intellectually; there's no doubt about that at all in my mind, especially economic matters. But he held them honestly whatever his views were, and he kept them out of the public domain as long as he could so he could act as a go-between between the various

factions. Now, if he had stated his position immediately when an issue erupted, he could not have gone back and forth between the factions. That's all there is to it.

G: Let me ask you to talk about Proxmire's protest at length in addition to what you said, and particularly Johnson's reaction to it, how did other senators react to it, what the--

R: I think most senators recognized the basic nonsense of it. You weren't going to get party policy out of a caucus. All you were going to get was division, feuding in the ranks. Johnson himself I think just regarded it as a nuisance. He didn't take it too seriously. I think in one sense, though, it did hurt Johnson in that Proxmire kept talking about his dictatorial leadership so long that I think other people began to assume subconsciously that there was a dictatorial leadership.

G: You suggested that Johnson take a vacation during this period because of the grumbling going on.

R: I've forgotten that. It's logical, though, it's logical.

G: Was Johnson becoming less popular as--?

R: No, he was never popular.

G: Or more unpopular, should I say?

R: It wasn't either one. Bill White had that one marvelous line about Lyndon Johnson a long time ago in which he said that the senators regard him the way the troops would regard a cranky infantry captain, that he might drive the hell out of you, but he'd get you through the battle. And that was one of the real secrets to Johnson's success, the belief that everybody had that Johnson would work it out somehow.

Now, what really led to the grumbling that year was that things weren't working out. And therefore, the thing that had saved him up to that point, his reputation for getting the troops through, that was beginning to wear thin, leaving very little except the genuine dislike of him. Now, the dislike was not universal. The funny part of it is some of the people who would attack him most bitterly, like Wayne Morse, I think had real affection for Johnson. Johnson and [Richard] Neuberger got along very well, too, which kind of surprised me. You could never be quite sure just who Johnson would get along with and who he wouldn't. For instance, he and Bill Fulbright got along very well, which was really rather startling.

G: During this controversy, Proxmire requested notes from the Democratic caucus, and--

R: Oh, boy!

G: --Johnson was ill, I guess, and--

R: Not caucuses, no. Policy Committee meetings.

G: Okay.

R: I think he wanted both, I think he wanted both.

G: Johnson was ill at the time and evidently [Mike] Mansfield made the decision to send them to Proxmire, as acting majority leader. Do you remember that?

R: No, I don't remember Mansfield making that decision. I remember--I think it was Bobby Baker's secretary that refused to give them up. What the devil was her name? Oh, no, she wasn't in the office that

day, that's right. She got so damn mad when somebody did give them up.

G: Well, now, according to the memoranda Mansfield got them from Johnson's office, or from Bobby Baker's office--

R: Bobby Baker's.

G: --and gave them to Proxmire's office.

R: It was the caucus, that's right. It was the caucus.

G: But when Johnson found out about it, he demanded that they be retrieved, and Proxmire gave them back before he had a chance to read them, theoretically. Do you remember that? And Johnson's reaction?

R: Vaguely.

G: Why didn't Johnson want Proxmire to have them?

R: I don't know. I don't know. There's no reason in the world why he shouldn't have. This was the sort of thing where Johnson could often make enemies unnecessarily. To a certain extent since Proxmire wanted them, I think his assumption was that there must be something in there that would hurt Johnson, so Johnson wasn't going to let him get that kind of ammunition. I think that may have been it. It was very foolish on his part.

G: What was Johnson's general reaction to Proxmire?

R: Bewilderment. Bewilderment and irritation.

G: Did he retaliate against Proxmire?

R: No, not to my knowledge. It would have been foolish to do so. Proxmire was unpleasant, but he really wasn't hurting anything.

G: [Albert] Gore also joined in the criticism of Johnson, and I think his criticism particularly centered around the unemployment compensation increase and the failure of Johnson to promote this more than he had. Johnson's argument was that the Democrats were so evenly divided on this issue and others that you couldn't have a party position.

R: Right.

G: Anything on Gore's opposition?

R: No, I think Gore was very ambitious to become the leader himself. He was a very ambitious man. And of course again obviously what he was doing there was falling into that old mistake of assuming that the Democratic leader has all kinds of power that he doesn't have.

G: Another issue that was related to this was the Eisenhower tendency, particularly this year, to veto legislation. Johnson described it as really using a blackjack on Congress, the threat of vetoing legislation.

R: Made it awful tough that year, you know.

G: Let me ask you to go into this in some detail.

R: There wasn't too much detail to go into. What seems to have happened in 1959 and 1960, Eisenhower began playing the political game, and it turned out that he was very, very effective. When he vetoed a bill, the veto stuck. His mere threat of a veto could prevent a bill from going through, or could even change it after it had gone through and was still in conference between the two houses. And I think that this is another reason why Johnson's Senate record was not so good in 1959 and 1960 in that Eisenhower had picked up a lot of skill.

G: Why do you think Eisenhower suddenly was becoming much more active in legislative areas?

R: I think with an election year coming up, he felt that he owed something to the Republicans. That's only a guess on my part, though.

G: One of the issues was the housing bill, and this Eisenhower vetoed twice before an acceptable measure was passed. Do you recall that and Johnson's [reaction]?

R: I recall it but I don't recall anything unusual about it.

G: He also vetoed the wheat bill, do you remember that?

R: No, I don't remember it.

(Interruption)

G: Okay, let me ask you to go over that again.

R: You mean the question of why they kept bringing this legislation up after it had been vetoed?

G: Right.

R: That was one of the things that was done against Johnson's better judgment. So many senators were up that year that they thought they wanted to have a record that they'd tried to do something and had been blocked by Eisenhower. And they also had the feeling that this would help the Democratic candidate. Now, Johnson did not share that belief. Johnson thought the only record that really ever helped you in a campaign was a record of having done something rather than a record of having taken a position. But nevertheless the pressure from the various Democrats was sufficient that he really had to go ahead and stage those votes, all of which were futile, to overturn the vetoes.

(Interruption)

There was an awful lot of action, but none of it was productive or effective. It was sort of a quarrelsome, a nitpicking year in which we went through an awful lot of motions that got us absolutely nowhere. He'd argue with the administration about this, then argue with the administration about that. And it seems to me that from a public standpoint he lost every battle. But we invariably got placed in the position where all we had was a record of having stood for something.

G: Do you think that one of the reasons for the behavior this session was to build a record for 1960, is that what--?

R: Not his, no. But obviously there was an overwhelming desire on the part of most Democrats to have something to go into 1960 with. They were under the impression that the best thing they could go in with was a record of having stood for a number of things. I myself am not sure what his own motives were, but I still fundamentally have the idea that he had become tired of politics and tired of government and really was not devoting full time and attention to it.

G: Did he ever talk about this to you? Did he ever--?

R: No, not in so many words, but he really didn't talk about things like that. He'd start suggesting that everybody in the Senate could go commit a biological improbability, he was sick and tired of the whole works. Of course, he said it in a rather short Anglo-Saxon manner. He'd talk about "screw 'em all, I'm sick and tired of this kind of nonsense." And I've heard, but only indirectly--I've not heard in any

way that I could nail down--that in conversations with some very, very close, and I mean very close personal friends, that he talked--

(Interruption)

--and in effect telling them that he thought possibly it was about time that he get out of government and politics altogether and go and enjoy life. Now, however, I want to be very careful about that because all of those conversations came to me indirectly and I couldn't swear to them. I wouldn't remember them at all except they fitted in with the general impression I had as to what was going through his mind.

G: Did he indicate a greater interest in private business, going into some sort of business venture?

R: Not really. I don't believe that it was a career question quite as much as it was a feeling that life had somehow passed him by. He operated on a very primitive philosophy which he once described to me as the first part of your life you spend preparing for it, the second part of life you spend doing it, the third part of your life you spend enjoying it, which is, shall I say, a rather sad approach to the business of existence. But I think at that particular point it is just possible he had reached the conclusion that he was in the third stage and he better hurry up and enjoy it. Certainly he did not pay full-time attention to his business in the Senate. He was there as much as he'd ever been before, but he did not have the sharp perceptions.

G: If he did not pay as much attention to the day-to-day legislative

business of the Senate, what about the politics of his own re-election, of national politics?

R: None, virtually none, which of course may sound rather strange from those who remember the political activity in 1960, but there he really got forced into it. He really got forced into it. At that point he had a following that was not satisfied by any of the regular Democratic candidates, not satisfied by Kennedy, by [Stuart] Symington, or by [Estes] Kefauver. A following that sort of considered him a rock of stability inside of the Democratic Party. And at a certain point a political leader does come under heavy obligation to his constituencies. I think that accounts for the half-hearted, for the weird character of his so-called campaigning for the presidency in 1960. Blow hot, blow cold, blow hot, blow cold. He'd wake up in the morning saying "to hell with it, I'm not going to do a damn thing," and that afternoon he'd be talked into doing something, going somewhere to make a speech. But by the time he got there, it would be half-hearted. But everything was too late, everything was too late. But, again, I think that was his own doing.

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you to analyze the source of the Johnson for President movement in 1959.

R: There were really a number of different sources, some of them a little bit surprising, most of them I think, though, out of elements of public life that were older and that to a great extent were losing their grip on things. Obviously there was Texas, in which Texans just

out of Texas pride were overjoyed to have Johnson as a presidential candidate. But that's just the first one that comes to mind because it's so obvious. It's also obvious that it's the least effective, that Texans couldn't all by themselves get a nomination. Secondly, however, and this does become more important, there was a very important wing of southerners who are relatively moderate and who wanted to maintain alliances with the more modern elements of the Democratic Party in the North and the West, southerners who consider themselves prisoners of the more extreme white supremacy groups in the South. Also, among many of those southerners was the feeling that if somebody from a Confederate state could get elected president, it would finally put an end to the Civil War. This is Dick Russell basically.

Then you had many of the western senators who again were very strongly for Johnson, not because they regarded him as a westerner particularly, but because the western senators are very, very pragmatic as a rule. You know, they do not have the tremendous House delegations to back them up. Therefore, what they have is the full weight of the problems of their states on their shoulders. Then they tend to be even more pragmatic and in some respects even abler at parliamentary maneuvering than the South, because they don't have as much power as the old Confederate South has. They were pretty much for Johnson, because they liked that pragmatic form of leadership in which there was plenty of room for maneuver.

Now, a few sources that will surprise you: very, very strong Jewish support of Johnson, very strong, largely because he had had

such satisfactory relations with the Jewish elements in Texas and because men like Dave Dubinsky of the ILGWU, even though he was not a fervent Johnson admirer, had been impressed by the fact that when he went down to Washington he couldn't get promises out of Johnson, but whatever was promised got performed. I remember Dubinsky making a speech on that in the 1960 campaign up in New York City.

Then there were the New Dealers, and the New Dealers were pretty much pro-Lyndon Johnson. Don't forget, Lyndon Johnson had been one of the young New Dealers with Tommy Corcoran and Ben Cohen and Prichard [?] and that whole crew. And then there were the Truman people who were for Johnson I think because the Truman people were sort of overly masculine and Johnson could be very masculine when he wanted to be masculine.

G: Who were the Truman people that you're [referring to]?

R: Obviously people like Stu Symington, who was a candidate himself but I think would readily have switched to Johnson; Dean Acheson; who's that lawyer that was secretary of the interior under Truman? God, it's funny I can't think of his name. He had an office down on E Street. Chap--

G: Oh, Oscar Chapman?

R: Oscar Chapman. He was a strong Johnson supporter. A whole long crew of people like that, and I think Truman himself was ready to toss his support to Johnson at any time.

G: There was a press report of a secret meeting between Rayburn and

Truman in which it was decided that they would support Johnson or Symington. Do you recall that?

R: No, I don't recall it, and I wouldn't be surprised if it didn't happen, but I don't attach much significance to it.

G: Anyone else?

R: I think those were the principal elements.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to this?

R: Negative, very negative. And of course that was rather foolish. I pointed out in that one memorandum that it really didn't make any difference how he felt about it, this thing was going to arise, which it was. But he himself kept insisting that he wanted no part of it whatsoever, and yet every once in a while he could be talked into doing something. And that accounts for some of the quick forays out into the field.

G: Ernest McFarland seems to have been working eagerly for him in Arizona, and he dictated a reply to McFarland and in telling whoever drafted the letter what to reply, he said, "Don't deny that I'm running, but. . . ."

R: That doesn't mean that he was running. All that it means is that he was taking my advice there to keep everybody kind of guessing. Yet at the same time my honest conclusion is that he had highly mixed feelings. I think he wanted to run in one part of his body and did not want to run, just wanted to get out of politics in another part of his body. But the result was that everything that we did was much too little, much too late. I can still remember going into Wyoming for

him to make a couple of speeches. I got in the car with the reporters that were accompanying us on that trip, and the car was driven by Teno Roncalio, who now is I think a congressman or a senator from Wyoming, then was the state chairman. Somebody asked Teno how Wyoming was going to go, and he said, "Oh, all Kennedy." I said, "How about Johnson?" He said, "Well, we like Johnson all right, but the Kennedy people have been working this state for six months, they've got everybody sewed up." That was pretty significant. He didn't know, of course, that I was working for Johnson.

But we ran into that everywhere. I remember Ed Johnson of Colorado, who was a very strong Johnson supporter, came out with quite a statement for Johnson that made all the Denver papers. Sent a clipping to Johnson saying, "Here it is," he said, "but I'm sorry it's not going to do the slightest bit of good. This state's already gone for Kennedy." Ed Johnson was very much of a realist in politics. All too late. And I think again that it was a question of Johnson battling Johnson as to whether he wanted to do it or not. The campaign that we ran was really rather pathetic.

G: I noticed that some people like Jim Rowe went to [Hubert] Humphrey when Johnson did not become active early on, joined the Humphrey campaign.

R: Rowe was a strong pro-Johnsonite.

G: There were implications that Johnson was behind the Humphrey candidacy, because you had people like Rowe supporting Humphrey. What was Johnson's reaction to this?

R: I never heard him react to that, but I don't think that Johnson was particularly supporting Humphrey. I think that he and Humphrey got along quite well, and I think he would have rather seen Humphrey make it than any of the other candidates. But I think that was just Jim Rowe himself. You know, Rowe couldn't stay out of a presidential campaign.

I remember one other example, by the way. I personally called Dean Acheson to try to get his support for Johnson when Johnson finally authorized us to set up a committee. And Acheson was really heartbroken. He said that he would like to support Johnson, but he had inquired and was told that Johnson would not run and therefore he had gone ahead and promised his support to Symington.

G: One of the things that Johnson did do in 1959, it seems like, was to mend a lot of his fences with labor, to establish some friendly contacts with Ralph Yarborough. He held a lot of meetings with the liberals and the labor people in Texas. Was this an effort to strengthen his control there, to mend fences? Why was he doing this?

R: I think there were a number of reasons. I think one was that side of him that really did want to do some running for the presidency; two, he had given me my head a little bit more in the labor field and I initiated a lot of that. But I think that the first thing that I gave you was the major reason. He was schizophrenic that year, and that one part of his schizoid personality, the mending the fences with labor.

G: Another element, of course, that led to a good deal of speculation about his candidacy was the legislation in the Texas Legislature to move up the primary date and to allow him to be on the ballot for two offices. Let me ask you to recall what you can about this.

R: I recall quite a bit about it, except that I had thought that that hadn't happened until after the vice presidency had been accepted. But it doesn't matter. The truth of the matter there is rather complex. The truth of the matter is that the running for two offices was something that an awful lot of the members of the state legislature wanted, because they wanted to hold two offices. Now, to be a member of the state legislature in Texas just means you've got a job for a couple of months every other year. All that it really does is detract from whatever your regular job is. And there was a very strong move in the state legislature to go ahead and pass a law permitting somebody to hold two offices long before anybody thought of applying it to Johnson. And to a great extent advancing Johnson as a reason for applying it was something of an alibi. Many of the members of the state legislature were voting for that bill for themselves but saying, "Look, I've got to do this for good old Lyndon." But don't ever underestimate what can happen, some of the chicanery in politics. Again, however, I think that this was that part of him that thought, "Well, maybe I am going to run after all, and if so, let's have this for safety's sake."

G: Now, Dorsey Hardeman was one of the sponsors of the bill. Seems like

the opponents were people like Bob Eckhardt and Henry Gonzalez. How much contact did Johnson have with the bill sponsors?

R: I don't know of any, which doesn't mean that he didn't have it, but I don't know of any. Johnson was damn good, by the way, at having all kinds of contacts that his staff knew absolutely nothing about. He was very good at that.

G: Do you have any examples of this?

R: No, because if I had--but I would discover--

G: You were just aware that that was the case?

R: Yes, because I would run into somebody and suddenly realize that that person had been intimate to an awful lot of conversations that I hadn't known about.

G: Price Daniel opposed initially this legislation. The legislature had to pass some amendments to satisfy him, and it's clear that Daniel was a little bit miffed with all of these developments that seemed to enhance LBJ's political clout in Texas.

R: I think that's right. You know, there was never really a warm relationship between Price Daniel and Lyndon Johnson. I think there was a warmer relationship with Bill Daniel than there was with Price. At least, I had a fairly warm relationship with Bill Daniel and got along all right with Price. But Price Daniel and Lyndon Johnson were always on the edge of flying apart on something. Price was something of a nitpicker, you have to realize. I think that if Price were reading the Lord's Prayer, he'd start editing it a little bit here and a little bit there. It didn't bother me too much to learn that Price

had to have some amendments; he would always have to have amendments to anything.

G: Anything, though, on the relationship between Daniel and Johnson during this period?

(Interruption)

R: No. But Johnson always claimed that he never had a chance to win, that is in 1960. My own judgment is that if he had started out deliberately about a year and a half before the convention, that he would have had a chance, would have had a reasonably good chance, too. But he didn't. He did not do anything to even come close to making an effort until late in the spring of 1960, and by that time, no, he did not have a chance. If he had started a year and a half earlier, he could have put together a very impressive organization. He could have had a Johnson for President Committee that would have included Dean Acheson, would have included Oscar Chapman, would have included Jim Rowe, Tommy Corcoran, almost everybody that had been close to either the New Deal or to the Fair Deal under Harry Truman. His relations with labor were rather good then. I doubt whether George Meany would have openly endorsed him, but he certainly would have given a considerable amount of covert help, because he and Meany, after I introduced the two, got along very well together. He would have had very strong Jewish support from a number of areas, and it would not have been too difficult for him to get black support. And he could have had Latin support easily; of course that wasn't very important in those days. I think he could have rolled all the Rocky Mountain states up had he

started early enough. Now, there aren't very many votes out there, but still it's rather impressive to have a whole tier of states. And I think he might have even gotten Dick Neuberger aboard, which would have meant Oregon, and of course Maggie Magnuson up in Washington would have gone for him ten thousand per cent. Now, you put all those things together, he could have gone into 1960 with a very powerful organization.

G: But didn't Johnson have a tendency to translate the support of a senator into the support of the entire state?

R: No, he knew better. This is one of the myths, one of the myths, that he thought he could get the nomination just by staying in Washington and having the senators get it for him. He knew better than that.

G: Did he?

R: He stayed in Washington because he wasn't quite sure that he wanted to run.

G: Did he ever talk to you about that very point, that for example Senator McFarland could not necessarily deliver Arizona?

R: No, but I know he knew that. He may have talked to me about it, but it would have been a casual conversation that I wouldn't remember. But I knew it; I have no hesitancy whatsoever in the statement that I made about his knowledge in that area.

G: Okay. Now, during this period Ronnie Dugger was doing a lot of interviewing among--oh, interviewing Bill Douglas and Dean Acheson and people like that.

R: Bill Douglas would have been for him, too, by the way.

G: Writing articles. What was the relationship between Dugger and Johnson at this point, do you remember?

R: Love-hate. Everybody talks about the love-hate relationship in Latin America; [it's] not nearly as interesting as the love-hate relationship between Johnson and Ronnie Dugger. I think they were both very fond of each other and they both hated each other. Ronnie was always straining to find something wrong with him, sometimes he really had to strain. Johnson, on the other hand, spent most of his time cursing Ronnie Dugger, but Ronnie never had any trouble getting an appointment with him. I think they were both sort of fascinated with each other. Of course, Ronnie had to be anti-Johnson.

Tape 2 of 2

R: Frankie Randolph really hated Johnson, and I mean hated. And, naturally, Frankie was the mainstay of the Texas Observer, which doesn't mean that that's the only reason Ronnie was against Johnson. I think he would have been against Johnson anyway. But it was sort of a question of convenience that he was the editor of the Observer at that particular point.

G: Do you think that Johnson felt that he could actually convert Dugger?

R: Probably not, probably not. But I think he wanted to try. And, again, he liked Ronnie. You have to realize one of Johnson's problems was in a sense he was acting out a role. Johnson was really a wild man out of the old progressive, populist tradition, and he dearly loved to raise hell, loved to indict power companies, loved to indict the greedy, rapacious lords of big business, that sort of thing. And

yet you couldn't get by in Texas in that. So what he was doing was playing everything soft and very low key, which certainly is not the Johnson personality. But here he had this man Ronnie Dugger who was doing and saying and being all the things Johnson would have liked to have been. I think that had a lot to do with it.

G: Let me ask you to talk about this memorandum, the Policy Committee this year, the changes that were significant.

R: A very serious situation had arisen. Johnson made an absolute fetish out of the letter count, which in some respects was not a bad idea because it was one way of giving him some picture of the flow of work through the office. But he had a habit of doing things in such a way that the burden of the mail would go to the wrong places, and what we were doing was just getting an overload in the Policy Committee. What we were getting was every difficult letter, really, and it didn't matter where that difficult letter came from. As Buzz [Horace Busby] pointed out, some crackpot in Waco, Texas might get a twelve-dollar answer, not leaving us enough time to do twelve-dollar speeches or twelve-dollar statements or anything else. I think Buzz and I may have talked about that situation even before he wrote that memorandum, I don't recall. But it was sort of a godsend because at least it did impel Johnson to instruct Walter [Jenkins] and all the rest of us to try to get something done about that mail and to get the flood cut down, which we did.

G: Did the Policy Committee then handle different kinds of things? Mail

that should have been handled by the Texas office went back to the Texas office?

R: Yes.

G: I see.

R: You see, what had happened was almost any difficult mail came to us whether it was Policy mail or not. If it was a hard question to answer, it was routed over to us for me to handle.

G: Do you think also that this was designed to avert criticism that Johnson was using the Policy Committee as his personal staff rather than for--?

R: You mean these steps proposed here?

G: Right.

R: I didn't hear much of that really. I don't think there was too much criticism. I think that Buzz used that, and I think I may have used it, too, as a means of getting--

G: Did Johnson use the Policy Committee as a personal staff rather than--?

R: Oh, of course. He would use anything as a personal staff.

G: Should he have used it less so and more to serve the Democratic members of the Senate?

R: No, not to serve the Democratic members of the Senate. That isn't the point. The point is not that he was making personal use of the Policy Committee staff; the leader will always do that. But he was making unintelligent use of it. Now, Buzz couldn't write him a memo saying, "Look, you're making unintelligent use of the Policy Committee staff." So what he would say was, "Look, it's beginning to look like

you're using them as a personal staff and you'd better correct that." I think that was mostly a strategic device, to induce Johnson to make a change that he should have made anyway, and that is to really use the Policy Committee staff for what it could do.

We had one hell of a good staff at that point, one of the ablest staffs I think that Capitol Hill has ever seen. We were sitting down dictating letters till we were going bleary.

G: In 1959 you had the creation of the Joint Economic Committee which Paul Douglas chaired. Let me ask you about the creation of that committee and its significance and the significance of appointing Douglas the chairman.

R: Oh, I think Douglas was appointed chairman primarily because he was a professional economist, and Johnson would certainly have no objections to it, because, you know, those joint committees can't do very much. About all they can really do is express policy considerations which other people may or may not adopt. I don't think there was anything to it outside of that really.

G: One accomplishment of the Senate that year was the vote to admit Hawaii as a state, and the House that year voted the same.

R: Yes, that was one of the big accomplishments. It was very, very difficult to get, too. Of course, [John] Burns was the main man that did it, and he worked hard and Johnson worked hard on the House members. They did an excellent job. You had two problems with it, one was the feeling that Hawaii would vote Republican, the other of course was the racial mixture in Hawaii which still gave the southerners some

troubles. But I really can't think of anything outstanding about it. Of course, it could only have been done as tied to Alaska.

G: But Alaska had already been admitted.

R: Right. But, you see, there was a sort of an understood understanding that when Alaska went in that Hawaii would have to follow. That's why Hawaii went through so easily. You see, Alaska was Democratic, Hawaii was Republican at that point. Later it switched around, but--

G: Another measure that Johnson and John Burns worked on together was the establishment of an East-West cultural center I guess in Hawaii.

R: Oh, Lord, yes. I will never forget that one. Burns sold it to us and I put it in a speech because he had to have a speech. [Johnson was] making a speech I think before a women's club or something like that, women's Democratic Club. And he'd finally agreed with Burns to go along with the idea of the East-West center, so he made the speech. And the reaction, I think, rather surprised him. Got a very strong reaction. Educators thought it was a good idea, people all over the country. And it became a major headache for the office staff, working on that.

G: Why was this?

R: Oh, a tremendous amount of work had to be done. Have you ever been in on the setting up of a new college or a new university of any kind? It's tricky, it is tough. There are all kinds of policy problems. Gerry Siegel probably worked harder on it than anybody else, but he got groups of educators together and gradually hammered out a program for the East-West Institute, a fairly clear definition of what it

could and could not do. We were later present at the ground-breaking ceremonies when Johnson was vice president, you know. But it really meant an awful lot of work for a long time. Everybody got very exhausted. In fact, I think we thought up some unkind names for it as time went on, like Coolie College. And by the way, a bill was never passed on that; it went through as a rider on an appropriation bill.

G: Was that part of Johnson's strategy or--?

R: No, it was easier to do than to pass a whole bill.

G: Clare Boothe Luce was nominated to be ambassador to Brazil, and--

R: Oh, ho, ho, yes!

G: The nomination was approved, but shortly thereafter she made a statement about Senator Morse.

R: Oh, God, that woman! There isn't too much to tell you about it, it's all on the record. It just happened the way it happened. You know Morse had gotten kicked by a horse at one time in his career. Actually he had to live for several months with his jaws wired together, which for Morse much have been excruciating. What was her exact statement about the horse that kicked Morse?

G: I think she said her difficulties with Senator Morse began when he was kicked by a horse years ago, or something like that.

R: Yes, something like that. Well, Morse took the Senate floor and if that lady had ever seen that debate! Most senators hated Morse but, by God, on this one they were all with him to a man. You can't talk to a senator that way, that's their motto. There really isn't too

much to tell about it except he just made a devastating attack upon her.

G: Did Johnson try to mediate that at all or get her to apologize to Morse?

R: No, of course not, if would have been very foolish if he had.

G: Do you think that she made the remark realizing its implications, that it would affect her appointment?

R: I doubt if she thought about that at all. You've got to know Clare Boothe Luce to realize how she operates, if there's something in her mind she says it. She has a very sharp tongue. So sharp that it often runs away with her better judgment.

G: What was Johnson's reaction?

R: I think amused more than anything else. It was rather amusing really. God, Morse was indignant. After all the things he had called people, I couldn't quite see it myself. I thought it was funny, too. Let me add just one other thing. Neither one of them are very popular, you know.

G: Another nomination that was quite controversial was the Lewis Strauss nomination as secretary of commerce.

R: Oh! Yes.

G: Let me ask you to go into this in some detail.

R: No point in going into it too far. He had mortally offended all Democrats, or all liberal Democrats anyway, because of some of the things that he did in regard to the Atomic Energy Commission. He seemed to have been responsible for jerking [Robert] Oppenheimer's Q

clearance, and the man obviously was obsessed with the thought of communist spies. The result was that when he was nominated, there was a very strong desire on the part of many Democratic senators to block the nomination, which would have meant some real problems. Real problems because the capacity to pass upon a nomination in the Senate is one that has so much force to it it really must be exercised with responsibility. And the general rule in the Senate is that nobody gets turned down for a job unless they have shown through experience that they are going to be grossly derelict in their handling of it. So that got into this very elaborate fight over the Strauss nomination.

G: There was a feeling, I think, that he hadn't been completely candid with members of the Congress.

R: Oh, yes, not completely candid. But I think the more important thing was the record that he had run up as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. That set a lot of people's backs on edge.

G: Was there a measure of anti-Semitism in the opposition to Strauss?

R: I don't think so. There may have been, but I don't think so. The reason I don't think so [is] because I am so obviously Aryan in coloring and appearance that anti-Semitic bigots usually assume I am an anti-Semitic bigot, too. If there is any anti-Semitism around, I invariably hear about it. They suddenly look at my blue eyes and they decide, well, my God, he must be a noble Nordic. I can remember when anti-Semitism was really high in the United States. I could keep pretty close tabs on it, because I was constantly being addressed by

people who thought I was sympathetic to what they were saying. I disabused them. But during that period--and I was involved all through that debate--I came across no anti-Semitism. I've come across very little anti-Semitism in the United States since, oh, about twenty-five, thirty years. They had this episode out here in the suburbs where somebody painted swastikas on a synagogue, but I have a hunch that was a bunch of kids.

G: I know that Vice President Nixon's people seem to be utilizing the anti-Semitism charge to promote the Strauss nomination.

R: Oh, of course. Actually today an accusation of bigotry is a good way of putting something across, because it has become disrespectable, disreputable to be a bigot. If you can pin the label bigotry on anybody, you can get their vote.

G: Let me ask you about Johnson's position on the Strauss nomination. He waited until late and then he announced his position against the Strauss nomination.

R: Yes. Oh, I think that he was uncertain as to what it would do to the party, and I think he was laying back. I do not know how he would have voted early because I never once heard him discuss the Strauss nomination, not once. But I think I was just sort of assuming that he would ultimately vote against it, and he did.

G: Margaret Chase Smith voted against the Strauss nomination, and there was a little handwritten correspondence I guess from LBJ commending her for her vote or something of that nature. Do you recall that?

R: No.

(Interruption)

G: The Senate passed the Youth Conservation Corps measure that Hubert Humphrey had supported. Do you recall that?

R: I recall it, but I can't recall anything unusual about it. It was just one of those things that was dear both to Humphrey's heart and to Johnson's heart, and there was no opposition to it that I know of.

G: LBJ and John Williams had a rather heated debate over a seven hundred and fifty dollar Department of Commerce appropriation--

R: Seven hundred and fifty?

G: Seven hundred and fifteen, excuse me. Williams charged that LBJ had used sleight of hand to slip it through.

R: Seven hundred and fifteen dollars?

G: No, seven hundred and fifteen million.

R: Oh, that's a little more like it. I don't remember, but Williams was always fighting with everybody. What was the appropriation for?

G: I just have the Commerce Department appropriation. Evidently Williams wanted to have more debate on amendments that he had proposed and Johnson slipped it through. Do you recall that?

R: No, I don't, but you have to realize that Williams was a very contentious man, and it eventually reached a point where he was contentious about so many things that nobody remembered any of them. It was such standard practice for Williams to raise hell about something.

G: There was also a report accusing LBJ of getting [James] Eastland and the Judiciary Committee to sit on twenty federal judicial appointments

because he opposed the appointment of John Tucker for the Eastern District of Texas.

R: I remember the rumor. At the time I thought that it probably was true. I did not know that it was true. That was not the kind of thing that staff members would know anything about. Any senator that wanted something like that would communicate only with another senator. Staff members didn't get that sort of thing.

G: Why was it more sensitive evidently or done at a higher level?

R: Because they wanted to be a little bit ethereal about it. You know, "Who, me?" Just one of those things, I wouldn't attach too much significance to it, and I do not know whether the rumor was true or was not true. I do recall, however, knowing about it and thinking at the time that it probably was true.

G: Would Johnson have the kind of influence he needed with Eastland to do that?

R: Oh, sure, but then so would any other senator. You have to realize something about Eastland. Eastland came out of the older school of Senate ethics. He hadn't been around that long, but he had adopted the principle that if anybody was politically objectionable to a senator, that nomination was not going to come out of the committee. I'll never forget, in one case Gaylord Nelson had a nomination that he did not like. Eisenhower--I think it was Eisenhower--had nominated--no, I think it was more likely Nixon had nominated someone for a position in Wisconsin, and Nelson was very much against that man because he was antilabor, antiblack, anti-this, anti-everything else,

and he went to Eastland about it and Eastland said, "Well, look, Gaylord, everything you're telling me about that man makes me want to be for him." "Well, I'll tell you," he said to Gaylord, "you just tell me that man's personally obnoxious to you and that nomination won't come out till hell freezes over."

Now, yes, Johnson would have gotten that kind of cooperation out of Eastland, but any senator from any state could have gone to Eastland and had him sit upon a nomination. And in this particular case, of course, what would happen here is that Johnson would give him a broader approach, let's sit on all these nominations and do some bargaining, which is a very customary thing.

This is one the real weapons that the Senate has against the president. What you have to do, you have to look at the Senate and the House of Representatives, or rather the Congress and the president as being in a continual state of antagonism in which each one has some weapons. One of the president's weapons is his capacity to take the initiative whenever he feels like it. The president, for all practical purposes, sets the legislative agenda for the year when he sends up his messages. Another one of the advantages of the president is that the president can take the airways any time he wants to and explain his position to the American people with drums beating and bugles blowing and the whole works.

If those were the only weapons available, Congress would be absolutely powerless over the president. The congressional strengths are due primarily to the fact that Congress is the kind of body that

can diffuse issues. For example, you send up an appointment that they don't like, what Congress can do is suddenly put a deep freeze on twenty or thirty appointments. And nobody ever goes up to the president and says, "Look, Mr. President, you come through and we'll let those appointments out," but the president finds it out somehow. Or the president might have a series of appropriations that he wants very desperately. Well, he's going to discover that he's not going to get the appropriations unless he approves of some of the appropriations that Congress wants, too. This thing goes on all the time. It is normal parliamentary practice.

G: Do you think there was a consideration here in 1959 of stalling long enough to wait until the Democrats were in power?

R: Oh, that was one consideration, yes. But I think that's why all twenty were included. But, also, I think it was something of a bargaining chip with Eisenhower. I think that was a more important factor, the bargaining chip with Eisenhower. You see, if Johnson had just wanted to block that nomination, he just had to tell [John] Stennis to block it. My God, you couldn't have touched it without thick leather gloves; otherwise the dry ice would freeze your fingers off.

G: What sort of consideration could Johnson in 1959 expect in the appointment of federal judges from a Republican president in his state?

R: Not much. I would say that Ike, if he knew about it, would be unlikely to appoint a judge really obnoxious to Johnson. But he might not know

about it until it was too late, in which case he'd be stuck with it. But there was no protocol. Johnson could have no protocol expectations, just that it would have been wise for Eisenhower to have consulted him on anything.

G: Eisenhower rather unexpectedly vetoed the public works bill and Congress overrode the veto. Do you recall that measure and the--?

R: Well, I recall the incident, but as I recall, it was just an ordinary public works bill. Didn't have Kicking Horse Canyon Dam in it, did it?

G: I don't think so.

R: If it had Kicking Horse Canyon Dam in it, that'd be different. There were two projects that went together, Kicking Horse Canyon and Upper Colorado. Upper Colorado was the Republican project; Kicking Horse Canyon was a Democratic project. Both of them got held up until finally a deal was struck, and they were both sent through. The Republicans were bitterly against Kicking Horse Canyon because it was a public power project, and the Democrats were bitterly against the Upper Colorado because it was Republican. That may have been involved.

G: The Senate passed a highway bill that raised the tax on gasoline from three to four cents and Eisenhower wanted an even higher tax. Do you recall that issue?

R: Not very well, no. That's not the kind of issue that produces anything very dramatic.

G: Another issue was whether or not Congress should stay in session while Khrushchev visited the United States, or whether they should adjourn

and give the appearance of fleeing or being absent while Khrushchev was there, whether a show of democracy in action was important.

R: Where did you get that?

G: It's in all the material.

R: There may have been a lot of material there, but it certainly didn't--

G: It wasn't significant?

R: Good God, no. I dimly remember it, but I can assure you that no midnight oil was burned over that one. You've got to be careful about material sometimes. It's quite possible that the sheer weight of a large number of memos makes something look serious when all that really happens is a lot of people wrote memos.

(Laughter)

G: Johnson traveled to Nebraska, Minnesota and El Paso. He went to a top secret briefing in Nebraska, and then went to--

R: I was at that.

G: Can you recall this trip as a--let's see.

R: That was at Offutt Field.

G: Anything significant on this trip?

R: Nebraska was the trip to Offutt Field, which was a very impressive and sort of spine-chilling experience to be down there in the bowels of the earth and to see this huge war game being plotted out with such figures being tossed around casually, as on the first strike the Russians will kill forty million Americans and we will kill sixty million Russians, et cetera, et cetera. Everybody down there looked like Dr. Strangelove to me. Also the other impressiveness, however,

was the form of communications contact that they had at Offutt Field with the Strategic Air Command bases all through the world. God, that was something! There was a corporal down there that could immediately pick up Africa, Asia, any island that he wanted, just flick a switch and there it was. But aside from that, there was just a general briefing on the whole thing. No, there wasn't anything significant to that. It was what it looked like, a trip to get a briefing on the Strategic Air Command.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to the--?

R: Don't know.

G: Of course, this was his birthday. He gave a speech at the American Legion convention in Minneapolis, and then attended the opening of the Cordova Island Bridge in El Paso that evening, cut short by rain and then returned to the Ranch.

R: I don't think there is anything there that you couldn't get out of the newspapers. I remember every incident. I remember the dedication of the bridge, I remember the American Legion convention in Minneapolis. It was just planned and went ahead, that was all.

G: Nothing memorable?

R: No.

G: One interesting exchange of correspondence in the files: Herman Talmadge was invited to address a very conservative group in Dallas, and they asked that he not mention LBJ in his remarks. Talmadge fired off a letter saying he wouldn't speak unless he could say some complimentary things about Lyndon Johnson. Do you remember that episode?

R: No, I don't remember that episode, but the relation between Herman Talmadge and Lyndon Johnson was very, very warm. Johnson was highly impressed by Talmadge, and he thought that Talmadge was a rather maligned man because of his father, Gene Talmadge. I had the impression myself that Talmadge was a much abler man than I had anticipated. I don't know whether he was maligned or not, but Johnson quite literally thought he had been maligned.

G: The thrust of Talmadge's letter to the group was that Johnson had actually derailed a lot of much more sweeping civil rights legislation that would have passed, that he was a voice of moderation and had been very helpful to the southerners in seeing that extreme liberal legislation was not passed.

R: Of course overlooking the fact that extreme liberal legislation couldn't have been passed under any circumstances, and that the only way the legislation that was passed was passed was because of all the work that Johnson put into it. Talmadge knew what he was doing.

G: He did? He was just--?

R: That was camouflauge. You see, this was one of the reasons why the feeling that Johnson was a presidential candidate was useful. The fact that he was would get people like Herman Talmadge going to bat for him and protecting his rear. If he had just been another southern senator, Talmadge would have tossed him to the wolves.

One of the difficulties in dealing with constituencies is that constituencies always assume that there are choices which are not really there, like the choice between a strong civil rights bill or no

civil rights bill. Those choices weren't there at all. Sooner or later there had to be a civil rights bill, not immediately, but sooner or later. But it was not going to be the extreme sort of thing that was being pushed by the liberals. Those were not genuine choices. The battle between those who thought there was such a choice, that is [those] that wanted the extreme and [those] that wanted nothing, the battle was useful in a sense in that it kept the issue alive. But it was not a battle over attainable goals; neither goal could be obtained. And that is true of about 95 per cent of the legislation that passes in the Congress. It is not a matter of a choice between this position and that position; that is the rarest of all set of circumstances. What it is is a choice between a number of different variations of the middle.

Now, in this particular case Talmadge made a very good use of that misunderstanding of the constituents by saying that Johnson had headed off the more extreme legislation. That's completely phony, because Johnson hadn't headed off the more extreme legislation. The more extreme legislation wasn't going to come, there was no way in the world you could get it. But on the other hand, he was soft-pedaling the fact that at that particular point Johnson had put through legislation which otherwise would not have gone through.

G: Another area of controversy was the loyalty oath applied to student aid, student loans. Dirksen had a proposal that envisioned criminal punishment for any subversive that benefited from loyalty oath funds. You wrote a memo saying that you thought that the Dirksen

proposal was worse than the loyalty oath provision. Let me ask you to talk about this issue and recall what you can about it.

R: Do you have the date on that one?

G: It was July 7.

R: In 1959 or 1960?

G: And a little bit after that, the twenty-third.

R: That would be 1959? That was one of those very dangerous concepts that bob up usually in an election year or with an election year coming up, the sort of thing that makes people very, very nervous. I'm trying to remember now whether the loyalty oath--had the loyalty oath actually gotten into law?

G: Yes.

R: Okay. How it had gotten into law I do not remember. I think that that may have been just an administrative decision by the administration. But what it did, of course, was to really jeopardize the whole program, because who is to certify what is and what is not subversive. You know, a student applies for a loyalty oath and that student may be a member of the Epworth League and down the road somebody decides the Epworth League is subversive. For the love of God, it's one of those terribly dangerous things, and dangerous because the word subversive semantically has no solid anchor. Whatever I don't like is subversive. I think that I managed to convince Johnson on that one, that in a free society you can't live that way.

Now, the Dirksen proposal was worse than the loyalty oath. The loyalty oath was merely an oath, but to throw them in jail was just

incredible. But, you see, it would look fairly logical to the mythical man in the street who assumes there is such a thing called loyalty, called subversion, that is clearly definable. You know, some things are clearly definable. If I want to pass a law against burglary, I can define burglary. If I want to pass a law against arson, I can define a law against arson. But if I want to pass a law against subversion, how in the hell do you define subversion? Anything I'm against? Anything the people of the government now in power are against? What in the devil is it? So what you're doing is subjecting people to the terrible risk of jail and everything else over something over which they have no control. I remember that one, it was really kind of frightening.

G: The loyalty oath was retained, I guess. Let's see.

R: I think we got rid of it under Kennedy, if I remember correctly. Lord, it was bad business.

G: There were efforts to replace Paul Butler as chairman, and at one point Butler issued criticism of the Democratic leadership in Congress, typically saying we can't win in 1960 if we're going to ape the Republicans. Butler announced that congressional leaders were seeking to replace him with a certain western senator, and the press speculation centered on [Clinton] Anderson, Mansfield or Clair Engle. Let me ask you to recall what you can about this issue.

R: There was some desire to bring Anderson in, yes, for all sorts of reasons. Butler was really a pretty poor chairman. He was openly plugging for Kennedy long before it became apparent that Kennedy was

going to get the nomination. He was full of some very flaky ideas. I remember one horrible one in which he had the idea that we should have a special public relations campaign to sell the Democratic Party before the national convention. He hired some firm to make a preliminary survey, and he asked that the presidential candidates--and by that time Johnson was regarded as a presidential candidate--come down to his office and hear the presentation by this firm.

It was one of the most childish things I ever heard of. I was there, Ted Sorensen was there, Herb Waters was there for Hubert Humphrey, and Congressman [Charles] Brown was there for Stu Symington. Well, this outfit was going to sell the Democratic Party the same way that you sell lipstick. They had a silly song, "Now the Democratic Party's Good for You." But their principal idea was a series of cartoons showing a very nasty little elephant, dirty mind, squeaky voice, and a very wonderful donkey, warm, glowing, generous voice. And all kinds of things. The one that I remember the most, that really stuck in my mind, showed the elephant talking to a voter, and the elephant saying to the voter, "We need a president who understands the communication system of America." And the voter says, "That's right." "We need a president that has traveled around the world and been in international conferences." And the voter, by this time becoming very enthusiastic, says, "That's right." "We need a president that has been close to the Oval Office of the White House." And the voter says, "Right. I'm going out and campaign for him." And the voter comes out going down the street showing up a sign saying "Elect

Jim Hagerty." I looked at that damn thing, then I looked at Sorensen, and Sorensen kind of gulped, Herb Waters--oh, Jesus! Butler wanted to spend two hundred and fifty thousand dollars on that kind of crap. God, it was awful!

G: Did Johnson feel that Butler was encroaching on his legislative prerogatives as majority leader?

R: Not that he was encroaching, that he was trying to encroach, of course he was.

G: Is this the main reason for wanting to oust Butler?

R: No, no. Many people were unhappy with Butler. He had become so thoroughly partisan in his drive for Kennedy that he had turned all of the Humphrey people against him, all of the Symington people, all of the Johnson people. That was not just Johnson, that was a rather widespread desire, to get rid of him.

G: Why did it fail?

R: Because it's pretty hard to get rid of him. Don't forget, he didn't owe his job to those people in Congress; he owed his job to the Democratic National Committee, which at that time I'm sorry to say was staffed with an awful lot of people like Paul Butler. See, the national committee is a rather peculiar organization. In the first place, anybody that you put on it has to have enough money to pay their own way to Washington and back. And what that means is that one of the outstanding criteria is not service to the party or experience in party organization, one of the outstanding criteria is money. Secondly, quite often some of the members are composed of people that

were kicked out of state positions because the state wanted to get rid of them. Third, there's nothing to it except the honor of being a democratic national committeeman or committeewoman. And it's not the sort of thing that activists aspire to. Activists want to be someplace so they can do something. The committee mostly goes to people who merely love prestige and who are usually political dilettantes. If you look over the Democratic National Committee, you'll find any time, even now, very few experienced politicians on it. Those are the kind of people that would elect Paul Butler chairman. Now, the Senate couldn't get rid of him, because the Democratic National Committee is not a creation of the Senate.

G: How did the opposition to Butler go about trying to replace him with Anderson? They didn't go through the Senate. How did they--?

R: They talked about it was about all they did. There was very little action, because there wasn't anything they could do. The only way they could replace him was by going to work on the national committeemen and committeewomen.

G: Okay. Let's--

(Interruption)

R: One of the problems that Johnson had for a long number of years--the real leader of the ultraliberal bloc in the Senate was not in the Senate but outside the Senate, Joe Rauh, a man with a very forceful personality and a man who is about as far to the left as you could possibly get. He was not, I would like to stress, a communist. When I say he was ultraliberal, I do not mean that he was a communist. He

was just a man who adopted every liberal cause that came down the pike, and while he did not have control over senators, he was persistent and consequently he could always get someone within the Senate to pick up the cudgels for something in which he was interested.

Now, one of the difficulties with Joe--Joe, by the way, I think is the one who originated that nonsense about changing the rules at the beginning of the session. I think that's where it came from originally. Or if not, he is the first one to introduce the idea to the Senate. But one of the problems was that Joe really did not understand, <u>really</u> did not understand the Senate. Very few people do, but his lack of understanding was a little bit extraordinary. And because he didn't understand the Senate, he was constantly picking up nitpicking issues that really were not of tremendous importance in and of themselves, but which could be converted into a rather difficult problem when inflicted upon the Democratic leadership. He was absolutely adamant against any type of accommodation and of course the lifeblood of the Senate is accommodation.

You know, in the Senate there are never winners or losers. It's not like the House. In the House every vote involves an absolute winner and an absolute loser. I've often thought that every time the House votes, somebody should be up in the gallery blowing the <u>deguello</u>, the bugle call that the Spanish forces sound when they're told to kill every enemy and take no prisoners. Because that's what House votes are like. The Senate votes are not like that. In the Senate everything, and I mean literally everything, has some form of

accommodation in it. So when one has someone like Joe Rauh to whom any form of accommodation is treason, this means there are inevitably bound to be these very thorny, knotty problems which require more attention than they're worth. He never got what he wanted simply because you can't get it out of the Senate. You cannot do things in the Senate the way Joe wanted them done, but try and explain that to Joe. I think that's probably why I said that this is another Joe Rauh deal.

G: This was a McNamara criticism of LBJ about unemployment. Do you recall LBJ's position on the unemployment compensation--?

R: No.

G: Let me ask you to just describe LBJ's relationship with Rauh.

R: He saw him very little, a very antagonistic relationship. I think this was a case of two very strong, very aggressive men who would dislike each other simply because they were aggressive. They did not understand each other at all, which--you know, some of the people that LBJ was constantly fighting with, he kind of liked. Wayne Morse, for example, or Ronnie Dugger. But I think that Wayne Morse and he had an understanding of each other. He and Rauh were not in the same wave length on any issue that one could think of.

G: Did you ever see them together?

R: I never saw them together, no. I knew Rauh fairly well. Incidentally, the one time I ever saw Rauh bend was when the Civil Rights Bill in 1957 was finally passed. I think Jim Rowe was the one that sold Rauh on this; I could never sell Rauh on anything. I think Jim

Rowe did it, but Rauh finally agreed to a statement coming out of the clearinghouse which said it was a lousy bill, it wasn't worth a good goddamn except there was just enough merit in it to make it better than no bill at all. Which, believe me, was a tremendous concession for Rauh. That's the only bend I've ever seen. Jim Rowe later told me that Rauh was the one that had swung that particular wording. Otherwise, there would have been a solid statement of opposition against the bill.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XIV

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