

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 19, 1971  
INTERVIEWEE: SAMUEL SHAPIRO  
INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ  
PLACE: Mr. Shapiro's office in Chicago, Illinois

Tape 1 of 1

F: Now, Governor, very briefly, let's bring us up to 1968, and how you got into politics and how you happened to get to be governor.

S: Well, I got into politics a long time before 1968.

F: Yes, sir.

S: My first venture into politics was in 1932, when I felt not an obligation, but felt that I wanted to help the Democratic candidate for governor at the time who was Henry Horner and who was sort of an idol of mine. Henry Horner was a probate judge in Chicago.

F: I remember him.

S: He treated me so well in his court room and made me so much at ease, when I appeared before him--I think it was in 1930 or 1931--that when he came out for governor in 1932, I just felt like I just wanted to back him and work for him, which I did. He was elected governor. In 1933 I was appointed city attorney of Kankakee, Illinois; that's my home. I was city attorney there for two years. In 1936, I ran for and was elected to the office of state's attorney, which is sometimes called the county attorney, prosecuting attorney for the county of Kankakee, and I served in that office for a term; after which, I entered the service. I was in the Navy.

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F: Whereabouts in the Navy?

S: Well, I was in anti-submarine warfare and served various places. My last period of service was at the base at San Pedro, and the last part of my service was as a member of the court martial board. I came back to Kankakee in 1945 and reopened my law office. In 1946 I ran for and was elected to the House of Representatives; I served there for fourteen years. And in 1960 I was elected lieutenant governor, with Otto Kerner as governor. I served as lieutenant governor until 1964 at which time I was re-elected. [Governor] Otto Kerner was re-elected. Then on May 21, 1968, Otto Kerner resigned the office of governor, having taken an appointment and was I think the previous day, or at least within that week or so sworn in as a member of the United States Court of Appeals.

F: I rather gather, though, that you had been actively running the state for a month or so before that.

S: That is correct; actually, the year before that, too, the year of 1967. Early that year, Otto Kerner was [appointed]; maybe he was appointed in 1966, but I don't recall when he was appointed as chairman of the Kerner Commission.

F: Yes. Right.

S: I don't recall when he was appointed, but after he was so appointed, he was away from the state for, in 1967, I think it was one hundred and four days, approximately one hundred and four days of that year, that he was away from the state; and of course, I ran the state all the time that he was away. So I have had considerable

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experience.

F: Right. Were there any particular circumstances surrounding Governor Kerner's appointment that you were privy to, or did the President just call him and suggest that he . . . ?

S: Appointment to the court?

F: Yes.

S: No, I wasn't privy to anything on that appointment. I knew he was being considered.

F: Yes.

S: And, I think, in conversations with him, no doubt, that was mentioned, but as a matter of fact, the appointment came by phone. He was notified by phone; we were at a meeting at Springfield that day. Hubert Humphrey was in Springfield; there was a noonday meeting and he was called out of the meeting. That is, Kerner was called out of the meeting, and that was the day, I think it was announced that he was being appointed.

F: Had you met President Johnson prior to becoming governor?

S: Yes. Yes, I met him in the 1964 campaign.

F: When he came here?

S: Yes. In fact, I was with him on his plane and spent, well, I don't recall, three or four days. All the time he was in Illinois, I was with him.

F: How did that 1964 campaign seem to go from your standpoint?

S: I think it went well, went well. He was a great candidate.

F: Did he show any more ability to communicate in, say, the south

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part of Illinois than up here around Chicago? I have an Illinois background myself. My father came from down between Virden and Girard, and then a whole group of Frantz's have lived out at Sterling. So I'm not unfamiliar with how the state is set up politically.

S: Well, I was in the campaign with Truman in 1948, when he made that southern trip.

F: Yes.

S: I was on the train. I was in the campaign, of course, with Stevenson in 1952 and 1956, and was on his trains when they went through Illinois. So I had been over the state many times.

F: Yes. You had perspective. Johnson seemed to handle both the sort of small town voter as well as the city voter.

S: Very well. You know, even in a motorcade, he'd stop the motorcade I don't know how many times, and he'd get out amongst the people. When he was president, I imagine he just tormented the Secret Service quite a bit, because he would just jump out of the car and right into the crowd. He was a great campaigner.

F: Went over well in Chicago?

S: Oh, yes. Went over well wherever he went.

F: Yes.

S: Mrs. Johnson was fine, too. She was with him, I would say, most of the time when he was in Illinois. Of course, I had seen him before; when he was vice president he had been to Chicago. I was with him, at the time, I think. During the time he was vice president, he came to one of the big dinners here in Chicago. So I had met him before

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the campaign.

F: Yes. In that period after Governor Kerner was notified he was going to be a federal judge and before you officially became governor, Martin Luther King was, of course, shot down in Memphis. You had your problem here on the West Side with the riots that followed, and you were the one who had to handle that situation.

S: Yes. I was the acting governor at the time. Otto Kerner was still the governor. He hadn't resigned yet, at that time, as I recall.

F: Yes.

S: As a matter of fact, he was in Florida making a speech there, a dedication speech, when this broke here in Chicago the day that Martin Luther King was killed. I, of course, conferred with Otto Kerner on the phone, but it was my responsibility and I took it upon myself to call out the National Guard, and they took hold. It was a very memorable time, as I remember.

F: Yes. Did you deal directly with the White House in this?

S: Yes, we had to. In order to call out the National Guard, we had to make a request. Actually, the request is to the attorney general, but it's through the White House. As a matter of fact, you call the attorney general through the White House board and the request of course also comes to the governor by the mayor of the particular city involved.

F: I would appreciate it if you would just sort of give me a narrative of how that all developed.

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S: Well, just as soon as it broke . . . I'm trying to think back now. As I recall, I think Mayor [Richard] Daley called me and made the request, and I immediately made the request of the attorney general through the White House switchboard. I had no problems, no difficulties in reaching anyone that I had to talk to, no problems of reaching the attorney general. I think Ramsey Clark was attorney general at the time.

F: Yes.

S: I think that I had him on the phone, oh, I would say, within five minutes time. No problems at all. There were no delays. The request was granted. Everything was done that had to be done.

F: On a request like that, can it be granted over the telephone, or do you have to have some telegram, something tangible?

S: Well, you have to submit your request by telegram, of course. But in order to save time, I made the request by telephone. And of course, bolstered it, came through with the telegraph request, too. And it was all done and I had no problems. As I say, there were no blocks in the way any place.

F: Did the Justice Department send someone out here, then, as a sort of man on the scene?

S: I think they did.

F: Was it Warren Christopher, do you remember?

S: That name . . .

F: Did he come?

S: That name is familiar. I think that's right. I hesitate to say

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absolutely, but I think that's right. That name registers.

F: Was he much in evidence, or was it almost entirely your and Mayor Daley's responsibility?

S: Well, I think it was our responsibility, and naturally if he were the one--whoever presented themselves, why, got all the cooperation.

F: Did the President himself ever call you on the situation, or do you recall?

S: I don't recall, frankly.

F: But you weren't in a position of having to check with Washington all the time before you made certain moves? Once you got the permission, then you were on your own?

S: Oh, once we got the permission, once the National Guard was out, that was it. We just took over.

F: Did the National Guard seem to quiet it all right?

S: Oh, yes. Yes, the National Guard acted beautifully.

F: Did you have any feeling, later, that this might have hurt you politically with the black population, or do they understand the need in this situation?

S: I don't think so. I think that everyone realized that there was a need for it.

F: Well, now, then, you become governor; you're faced with, of course, the fact that the national convention is going to be held in your state, and it's pretty evident, early, that this isn't going to be any ordinary convention. How much were you involved in the actual convention? Of course, I realize that it's a Chicago project to a

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certain extent, but you can't avoid it being your project, too.

S: Well, my activity there: Of course, in the convention proper, I was chairman of the Rules Committee. I participated in the welcoming ceremonies. Of course, I was a delegate. But there were a lot of problems prior to that that were sort of confronting us, and that was [added]. I don't recall whether the taxicab strike was on, or whether it was threatened.

F: By the time that the convention came on, the strike was what you might call a slowdown.

S: Yes.

F: You didn't have a full complement of cabs running.

S: Well, I suppose . . .

F: I think about one-fifth of the normal number or something.

S: Well, I don't recall that, but I do know that there was another strike on, too, by the electrical workers.

F: Right. Against Illinois Bell.

S: I was at the Governors' Conference in Cincinnati. And at that time, I had word that there was going to be some meetings within the next few days that were going to resolve the electrical strike; maybe not resolve the problems of the strike, but at least resolve it so that the installations could be made for the convention. I so made the announcement at that Governors' Conference and it happened that way; two or three or four days later, the electrical union did agree to let the work go on at the convention hall.

F: Did you get the feeling that this was a politically motivated strike,



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or did they just think it was a good time to have one, in view of their necessary position?

S: I don't think it was a politically motivated strike, no. I think, maybe, they probably had their problems; I don't recall. I wasn't any part of the negotiations of the strike.

F: Yes.

S: But I would assume that the contracts were up and they were negotiating for new contracts. At least, I imagine that's it. I never went into the details of that because I wasn't called in on it, and consequently, I didn't become a part of it. But we did have some word with reference to the fact that there would be trouble at the convention. And because of that, Mayor Daley did call me. I talked to him on the phone, and he indicated that there might be trouble during the convention and requested the National Guard. I did call out the National Guard and they were available here; they were available all during the convention. I met with the general who was in charge almost nightly. My suite at the Hilton Hotel was right over Michigan Avenue, facing the park, so that I saw what was going on, that is, at the time that I was there and not at the convention hall.

F: Yes.

S: I am very proud, frankly, as to how the National Guard handled themselves. They were, I've got to use the word again, magnificent. They really were. We got a lot of compliments with the way they took it.

F: Neither you nor the Mayor ever considered moving the convention?

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S: Oh, no. Of course, the actual request for the convention, the holding of the convention, that was the Mayor's doings entirely. I went along with him, wanting it here in Illinois, and I don't think that. . . . At least, I, in the small part that I played, at no time had in mind to move it. I was always trying to get it to Illinois. And I hope that the 1972 convention comes to Chicago. I think it's a great convention city.

F: Yes. Did President Johnson ever confer with you during this pre-convention period about the possible problems at the convention? For that matter, about any other federal-state relations?

S: No, he did not.

F: Were you aware of his taking a role in the convention during the time it was meeting, or did he pretty well stay home?

S: Well, all I know about that is newspaper articles, and rumors, and that sort of thing, but I had no direct contact with the President. My contact was entirely with the different candidates: McCarthy, McGovern, and Humphrey. Seems to me like there was one more that I can't particularly recall right now. I thought there were four.

F: I can't remember, now, who it was.

S: But what I did as chairman of the Rules Committee: prior to the first meeting of the Rules Committee, I called in and asked each one of the leading candidates at that time, Humphrey, McGovern, McCarthy-- well, I was almost positive there was a fourth, but maybe I'm wrong-- but I asked each one to send a representative to a meeting and they all appeared.

Each one had their representative there and we sort of went over

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the ground rules for the Rules Committee and we had a very harmonious Rules Committee. I don't mean harmonious to all the problems there. Of course there were divisions. But what I mean is, it was a very orderly committee. I think everyone enjoyed being on it; everyone did their job well.

F: You did communicate.

S: Yes. We had good communications in our committee, with everyone, with the National Committee, with each of the candidates. One of the things that the Rules Committee did: when they did away with unit rule, I think that was possibly the greatest thing that the Rules Committee has done in many years.

F: Yes, that's tremendously significant over the long haul, and, I think, justifies the convention all by itself, if you hadn't done anything else.

S: We had a fight on that. The Rules Committee abolished the unit rule, and we had a fight on the floor; I carried the fight for the committee, for the majority of the committee.

F: Was it pretty hotly contested within the committee?

S: Oh, yes, yes, it was. Everyone that wanted to appear got their day in court.

F: Was the opposition largely from the southern states?

S: I would say so, yes.

F: Most of the northern, eastern, western states were ready to do away with the unit rule?

F: Yes, yes. That's right. As I recall, a member of the subcommittee . . .

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We tried to divide it so that it would be pretty equal, and we didn't try to give anyone any advantages. I think that, as I recall now, the minority report was given by the representative on the committee from Texas. And he's the one that submitted the minority report and debated his issues, his part of the issue; I took the part of the majority, and that was fought out on the floor.

F: Yes. I think that was Frank Erwin.

S: I think you're right. I don't recall, frankly, I wish I were better on names.

F: That's all right. Did you anticipate much difficulty on the floor? Did you just think you'd have to go through a certain amount of noise? In other words, did you feel you had the votes?

S: Yes. I was positive, or at least as positive as one can be, that we had the majority of the delegates with us. I say with us. I mean with the majority opinion. I didn't anticipate that the majority report would be amended or overturned. I frankly anticipated it would be accepted, and it was.

F: Yes. Within the Illinois delegation, was there any serious split, or, basically, was it a Humphrey delegation?

S: Oh, it was a Humphrey delegation. I think that, as I recall . . .

F: I know you went for Humphrey, but--

S: . . . there were just a few that were not for Humphrey. I recall one nomination that was made for McGovern in caucus, and it wasn't seconded. That one vote went to McGovern. I don't think he got

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more than one vote from the delegation. I think McCarthy got a few votes and that was it.

F: Did you personally have any physical trouble, as far as the convention was concerned? Because, of course, you're one of the more obvious people to, locally.

S: No, I didn't. I didn't have any difficulty, either getting in the convention floor or out of it, excepting one evening.

I left the hotel a little earlier than dinner time and my wife remained at the hotel to have dinner with some friends. Of course, I had security all the time.

F: Yes.

S: And part of the security went with me; part of it remained with my wife. They came in, into the dining room--this was told to me by my wife--and suggested to her that she better go to the convention hall, and she did, left a little earlier than was anticipated. They took her out, at least, under pretty heavy security, and it was right after that, I believe, that the stink bombs were thrown into the hotel at the Hilton.

F: Yes.

S: The last night of the convention . . . Well, let me go back a minute. I think that possibly that evening we were taken back to the hotel, and came in through the Wabash Avenue side--that's sort of a back way in through the kitchen--and, I don't know, through a maze of halls and things. The last night of the convention, security came up to me on the convention floor and said that they were insisting

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that I leave the floor a little earlier. I don't know why. I never questioned it. I said okay. So I got my wife who was there and we left the convention after it was over and after the final speeches were made. And on the way back to the hotel, I was listening in on the radio, and Humphrey was calling up to the platform the various governors, the Democratic governors that were there, and I was not there. And, oh, maybe later on, someone says, "I didn't hear your name," or "I didn't see you," or something like that. Well, that was the reason.

F: Yes. Did you ever think, really, that President Johnson might come to the convention, or were you pretty sure he wasn't coming?

S: Well, I thought maybe he would come. I think his birthday was around that time, too.

F: Yes, that's right.

S: Although I was no part of talking to him, or his staff, with reference to coming, I presume that Mayor Daley and his staff were the ones that were talking to him about that. I had no part in that. But I thought that possibly he might come, but he didn't, and he probably knew best and did what he thought was right; I go along with the President.

F: During the convention, the black community of Chicago distinguished itself by what to a lot of people was surprisingly good behavior. Did you have any evidence in advance that they were going to sort of sit out the demonstrations and not get involved?

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S: I didn't. Of course, I think they behaved very fine. This is the way it looked to me. And I watched it, when I'd come back from the convention. The demonstrations were going on in the park, and they'd go on with a lot of filthy language and agitation, 'til three or four o'clock in the morning. Frankly, the way I looked at it at the time: there were a lot of people there; they weren't all there to demonstrate; there were a lot of them there just to be there, just to see what was going on, to be part of the crowd. The agitators . . . I didn't think that the young people that were there were the main [source of] our trouble. I never did think that. I still don't. Our trouble seemed to be, oh, I'd say, around six o'clock, the real agitators came in. They came in with their bull horns and kept taunting the police, kept taunting the National Guard. How the National Guard, particularly, and the police kept their cool, so to speak, I don't know. But they were taunted something terrible, just unbelievable.

F: Yes, I heard some of them.

S: Did you?

F: Yes, I stood around. Now, federal troops were sent in from Fort Riley, Kansas, but were never used. Was this a federal decision to bring them in, or did you request them just as a standby?

S: Frankly, I don't recall. I know that I got a call from the general-- and I wish I could think of his name, he has since been promoted-- who was in charge of the [division], I think it was from Fort Hood, that came up.

F: That's right.

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- S: I met with him and some of his staff. I know he met with Mayor Daley. They were fine. They came in right on the button. I don't recall whether I asked for federal troops, or whether it was just sort of a something that they thought was necessary.
- F: Do you think the use of National Guard in a situation like this sort of turns the civilian population [off], or do you think they accept it as one of the necessities?
- S: No, I think they accept it as one of the necessary things.
- F: Did this plague you during your campaign, your own campaign that followed?
- S: I don't recall that it did. If it had any effect, I don't know of it.
- F: In that campaign that followed, did the fact that you were a Democrat and Johnson was a Democrat tend to hamper your campaign, or could you pretty well run on state issues and leave him out of it?
- S: Well, no, you don't, you'd like to, but you don't. I mean, sure, you present the state issues, but it's sort of a package deal, it seems like.
- F: I remember being in Chicago one time, years ago, when somebody had a banner somewhere over here on the north side, one of those squares, saying that he was running for justice of the peace and he was for the United Nations.
- S: (Laughter) Yes. Well, I tell you, after the convention, there was quite a lull. I would say that we lost a good month after the convention. I think the spirits of the Democrats were sort of downed a bit.



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F: Just sort of couldn't get refired, could you?

S: Couldn't get refired for almost a month, about a month. Everybody was sort of, shall I say, had a downhearted feeling, and we just tried to get them fired up. And then statewide, I think they thought it was sort of a cinch. Well, no election is a cinch.

F: Yes.

S: There isn't any such thing. We tried very hard to get Humphrey into Southern Illinois and to make that trip out of St. Louis, East St. Louis, and Carbondale, and Marion, and that area. Shall I say the same trip that Kennedy made in 1960, and I was with him on that trip. It was a great trip, and it did a lot of good. I honestly believe that if Humphrey had come through. I don't mean [to criticize] him personally. I don't think [he made the decision]. He didn't make the decision.

F: Yes.

S: I feel certain that his staff did. But if they had come through and made that sort of a trip as we begged them to, and I use the word beg advisedly, because we did. I know the Mayor tried to get Humphrey to make that trip, and I did. At one time, a member of my staff was talking to a member of Humphrey's staff and in the vein of trying to get them to come into that trip. And their answer kept being no; and so my representative said, "Well, it looks to me like you have written Illinois off." The answer came back over the phone, "You said it, I didn't." And I learned later that that was true. At least, it was told to me as being true when I was on the plane

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with Humphrey, and I think that was the last trip that he made into Illinois. One of the members of his staff--I was talking to him, I prefer not mentioning his name--said to me that he was in a meeting of their people where they discussed that trip particularly, and he was the one that was for the trip. And he was either alone, or maybe had one other with him. But the trip was turned down, and at that time, I don't know, I don't recall whether he said they did write Illinois off or whether they sort of felt that way. I think that if Humphrey would have made that trip, it might have made that little difference that we needed.

F: He came close.

S: Oh, yes, he came within a hundred and thirty or forty thousand.

F: Yes.

S: You see, that's only a change of eight votes to a precinct. That's all. My own change of six votes to a precinct could have made the difference. But that's it.

F: Yes.

S: That was 1968. We're looking forward, now, to 1972, and to me, it looks like a real good Democratic year.

F: Yes, I think you may have something waiting around the corner. Let's talk very briefly about the President's relations with the governors at the time that you were governor. You were talking about being over in Cincinnati earlier. Were the Democratic governors feeling that he'd sort of let them down, or did they feel that he just got hung on an issue?

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S: Well, I think that there was a feeling that the Vietnam issue was hurting. I don't recall, when we had our meeting in Cincinnati at the Governors' Conference, whether that was before or after he had made his announcement; I wish I could remember.

F: That was after.

S: After. But, I think the feeling was the Vietnam issue was the big issue that was hurting us. Humphrey told me that when he was in Springfield--he stayed with us at the Mansion overnight--and he kind of felt that, at least I got the feeling that he thought that the Vietnam issue was the big issue.

F: Did Humphrey ever talk to you about his problem as a candidate and sort of getting free of the Johnson image?

S: Well, he said that, as a Vice President, he was sort of bound to uphold the Administration. Whether or not he would have liked to free himself from the issues as they were already done, I don't know. I, frankly, didn't ask him, and he didn't say. But we talked for a long time. There was he, my wife, Jim Ronan, the state chairman, and Chris Vlahoplus, my press secretary, and we had quite a--

F: How do you spell that last name?

S: V-L-A-H-O-P-L-U-S. He was my press secretary. We spent, oh, maybe a couple of hours after dinner sitting there and talking.

F: Talking politics?

S: Frankly, I suppose we talked about a lot of things that I don't remember now.

F: Yes. Did you have any other relationships with President Johnson

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during your term?

S: Well, I wouldn't say . . . Of course, we had a lot of relations.

F: You've got a lot of mutual problems.

S: Yes, with the different departments. I would say that I had fine, fine cooperation from the . . .

F: Did you get the feeling that he did understand the sort of subtleties of federal-state relationships?

S: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I've always considered President Johnson as one of the most knowledgeable, if not the most knowledgeable, person on government and certainly on relations between the federal government and states. And I honestly believe that Humphrey was a close second, or equal. I think Humphrey is very knowledgeable about governmental affairs. But my relations with the President's office were always very good, very good. When I was governor, I had no problems at any time, so far as cooperation was concerned.

F: Were you ever able to get any insights into President Johnson's relationship with Senator [Everett] Dirksen? I realize Senator Dirksen's a Republican. He was also very much in Illinois' view at one time, and Johnson seemed to listen to him, some people thought even more than he should.

S: Well, of course, I couldn't answer that. I don't know whether he did or not. I would imagine that, having served in the United States Senate with Dirksen, that he advised with him, discussed things with him, and I think all of that was very proper.

F: Did President Johnson's relationship with Mayor Daley remain good

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throughout all this period?

S: Oh, the best, the very best. As a matter of fact, President Johnson has been here since the convention.

F: Yes.

S: Came here for a dinner; I think only because Mayor Daley asked him. I doubt he would have come other than that.

F: Did you see him on that occasion?

S: Yes, oh, yes. I saw him, I talked to him, just had a chance to--

F: What was the evening like?

S: It was a great evening. Johnson got one of the greatest tributes that I have ever seen given a man. He got a standing ovation that lasted, I don't remember, I know it was timed, but I don't remember, it must have been fourteen or fifteen minutes. It was a great ovation. He made a fine talk. He talked just generalities, and I thought it was a very good talk. He talked about his own memoirs, his farm, and that sort of thing. Actually, it wasn't a political speech, and it wasn't a governmental speech. It was just a sort of a homey talk, very good, very good. Mrs. Johnson was with him.

F: The charge was sometimes made that the Great Society, so-called, turned out legislation faster than states could absorb them.

S: I wouldn't say that they did that, but I do think that the legislation under the Great Society, as it was called, was so great and so much that I don't think that the people actually grasped the vastness of the domestic legislation. The domestic legislation alone, under Johnson, was more, I think, than I don't know how many previous

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presidents. I don't want to put him in that category.

F: It's considerable.

S: Yes, but it was a lot.

F: Yes.

S: A lot. There were so many things done on a domestic field that, well, as I say, I don't think that the people realized how much actually was done domestically under President Johnson.

F: You feel then that Illinois is ahead, socially, of where it would have been if you hadn't had that kind of hyperactive administration.

S: I don't think there's any question about it.

F: Governor, is there anything else we ought to talk about?

S: Well, no, excepting that I'm looking forward to 1972.

F: Right, right.

S: I'm going to repeat again: I think it's going to be a great Democratic year.

F: Good, good. Well, thank you very much, Governor.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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