INTERVIEWEE: Hobart Taylor, Jr. (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: Stephen Goodell

DATE : January 6, 1969

G: Mr. Taylor, I'd like to start this interview by asking you if you could give me a little background information about yourself, your professional training, and so on.

T: Yes. I went to the public schools of Houston, Texas; to Prairie View State College, where I got a bachelor's degree in economics; to Howard University, where I got a master's degree in economics. I then went to the University of Michigan Law School and finished up there. I don't know if it's important--I was editor of the Law Review, and I won the Campbell Award for Argumentation. I spent a year as clerk to the Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. I went to Detroit and entered a law firm there, and I worked for two years as a rather junior partner. And then I got appointed as Assistant Prosecuting Attorney--that was in 1949, I think it would be, January of that year. Somewhere about 1950 or 1951, I became County Corporation Counsel in Detroit, and I stuck at it for some years. In 1958 I opened my own office with several partners who have since done fairly well in the world, and thought that that was the end of my life, you might say.

But in the period of 1959 and 1960, because my father had known then-Senator Johnson, he called upon me from time to time to advise him with respect to matters, frequently dealing with civil rights, which was not a particular expertise of mine except that I had worked on the restrictive covenant case which had eventually gone to the Supreme Court.

G: What was the name of that case?

T: The Michigan case was Sipes against McGee. There were two of these cases, and the lead case came from Kansas, I think--the one that's generally cited. I don't recall the name of it. But the Michigan case is Sipes against McGee. I had written a brief in the Supreme Court of Michigan--I worked on a brief in the Supreme Court of the United States. I had also been very active in public accommodations matters, and had been a guinea pig and established the right of people to go to equity to get an injunction not only for themselves, but for their class and to get damages in equity. In other words, I showed that there was a common law remedy available, and that you didn't need all of these statutes--things of this sort--and that by going into equity, you didn't have to bother with juries, it was strictly up to the judge, and that eliminated the community's reaction as a factor in the thing. Up to that time everybody had been busy prosecuting these cases under the statutes as criminal matters, and the injunction, plus the damages, which would be substantially greater than what you could obtain in any law proceeding, was obviously a real deterrent, and that was the thing which made the Civil Rights Act enforceable in Michigan.

G: Was this the 1957 Civil Rights Act?

T: No. Michigan had a civil rights law going back to 1932 or 1933, somewhere along in there, which included public accommodations and which was observed in a breach as much as in performance. And what would happen is that people would go to court--when they were refused service, they'd call the police, the police would write it up; maybe they'd get a warrant and maybe they wouldn't, but if they did, there'd be a trial of the case, and the jury would find the fellow not guilty because he'd make some sort of spurious excuse. But when you went before a judge and the facts were laid out before him, you had a higher class of

individual who would make a determination on what the facts were. They were pretty clear on these things. Once a fellow was subject to an injunction, he really thought before he did anything because that judge could commit him for contempt. And this was something that people didn't want to have happen to them so they followed the law. The Restaurant Association so advised them after this happened, and it made a difference.

I might say, I guess, that people probably would feel that I'm not interested in civil rights--I've been very much interested in it for a long time, I've never been a fellow to blow my horn. For instance, I was responsible for the employment of Walter McLeod by Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, and the development of a project to get money from industry for the operation of the NAACP. Now in some three or four years this amounts to over half of the budget of the NAACP. And the people who discussed this were Bill Miller, the president of Textron, Roy Wilkins, and myself. We thought that this was a suitable and a proper thing to do.

G: When was this?

T: This would be either in 1964 or 1965. In fact, I was at the bank--let me see, because that's where McLeod came to see me.

G: At the Export-Import Bank?

T: Yes, but we started discussing it before I went to the bank. I went to the bank in 1965, so I would say that it would be in the summer of 1965 that we discussed this with Wilkins, and that it would be probably in the spring of 1966 when we got it established. 1966 and 1967 is when we raised the money. And I think our contributions are running at a level of about a million dollars or so a year where it was zero three years ago. This is the type of thing which I have always considered

an appropriate response by an individual rather than acting in some other way.

G: You described yourself as being a guinea pig in this--

T: What happened was, in this particular case in Detroit, my wife and I had been to the theater and we went to this restaurant which had changed hands and were refused service. So I decided then to institute the suit. And my partners--

G: This was not preplanned?

T: No. I had been to this restaurant many times and it had changed hands. I don't do things like that. I understand what you mean, but I think we should eliminate the possibility. No, I hadn't thought of it.

G: It was a spontaneous reaction.

T: It wasn't spontaneous either, it was a response.

G: That's what I mean, in that particular situation.

T: But I didn't act immediately or anything of the kind. I thought about it, and spontaneous carries with it the aspect of a lack of deliberateness, and this was a deliberate action on my part. I had to think of an appropriate response to it. Probably had my wife not been with me, I would have said it wasn't worth the trouble, but since she was with me, I resolved to do something about it. And then I resolved to do the most effective thing about it, while I was doing something about it, and so that was the way it was. Even as it occurs to me that the recent decision of the Supreme Court on this old statute relating to the purchase of property and the occupancy of property probably ought to be interpreted as having a larger meaning where commercial opportunities are concerned than mere residences are concerned. And yet people are not looking at it that way. I've written a letter to the NAACP suggesting to them to look at the opportunity this opens for entrepreneurship,

because I don't see the solution of the Negroes' problem coming from ownership in the ghetto because he's dealing, again, with low income people. And he has got to engage in more transactions to make the same amount of money. What he needs is freedom to move in the society, and he ought to look at his Bill of Rights as a Bill of Rights to engage in business with everybody and not to restrict himself in this way. I think this is a terrible mistake that some of the so-called radicals are making. So I don't oppose them on the ground of gradualism in that type of idea--I suggest simply that it's not feasible.

G: Were these your thoughts back at that time, or have these developed--

T: I can;t say what my thoughts were at that time; nobody keeps their thoughts in line on an annual basis. But I would say this. I am pragmatic, and I was a pragmatic person at that time. I did very well in school and was considered an intellectual and might have been a member of the academic community, but this has not been the road that I saw before me with the necessities of things. I understand what people are talking about, but I think if a thing doesn't work, it doesn't have much significance. The only purpose of developing theories and philosophies is to make things work better, is to help us to understand them better so that we can utilize them better. And so the iron test always is: does it work? And if it doesn't work, then we have to surrender the theory and find one more appropriate.

Now what else?

G: Well, I had asked you about your background. You were discussing your legal--

T: How far had I gotten?

G: You had gotten up to the Michigan--I think the last thing you said before I detracted you was that your father had been--

T: Oh yes. There's one other thing I want to bring in, if I may. I was the president of the first Negro mortgage company in Michigan, and I guess the legislature passed a joint resolution commending me on that a few years ago because we used the little money that we got together to break quite a bit of housing segregation. You see, a lot of housing segregation was caused, and continues to be caused, simply because you can't get financing for people to buy outside of certain prescribed areas. And so obviously if you created a mechanism whereby people could get the financing, that's the end of the matter. I thought that an appropriate response, and this is what we used in Pontiac, and with very strong effect to do a job up there, and also in some sections of Detroit.

G: Could you explain or expand on the role that your father played--was he acting as consultant to the then-Senator Johnson?

T: No, I don't think my father acted as a consultant. My father was a person and <u>is</u> a person who is very much interested in civic affairs in Texas. He attempts to organize people to do things that are progressive. He works at it. He is openhanded with contributions. He is not a millionaire as people think--I think he is well-off as people go. And it's by being conservative--had he been less conservative, he might have been better off though, but who knows the answers to those things! He came through the Depression and was poor like anybody, he has always been a hard worker. And he has always been liberal in public causes, and has trained me in the same way.

G: What I was getting at is how you first came into contact with Mr. Johnson.

T: Well, as I said, through my father and through Cliff Carter, would be the first two people. Cliff was a friend of my father's, and Cliff

liked me. It's an interesting story Cliff told me some years later. I was making a speech at Prairie View back in the early 1950's, and it was taped and re-broadcast over the educational station at Texas A & M. Cliff was driving down the road and heard the speech and agreed with it.

G: A chance factor like this.

T: Yes. And so he always kept me in mind after that. Of course, this is how everything happens in life.

G: Did he then in other circumstances present your name?

T: No. Another chance factor intervened. In February 1960, there was a meeting of Midwestern Democrats, so-called, in Detroit. Mr. Johnson was already a candidate for the presidency though it was a very low-key candidacy, if you remember, because he didn't officially begin his campaign until after the Senate adjourned that year, and thereby destroyed any chance that he would actually have of getting the nomination. But at any rate, Cliff and Speaker Rayburn and others, members of the Texas delegation and the House of Representatives, and Gene Locke and others, decided to come out to Detroit to attend the meeting and to proselytize for Senator Johnson. They called up the Sheraton-Cadillac and they couldn't get a suite. They couldn't get room at the Inn. And so they called me and said, "Look, this thing is being held there and we can't even get in the hotel. What should we do?" So I went over to see the manager, whom I happened to know pretty well, and I explained the facts of life to him. He said that the Michigan Democratic party had control of the rooms for these people, and that what he was probably up against was the fact that Michigan had already gone on record for Kennedy and they probably didn't want those Southerners there. I said I didn't think that was the thing to do. We had a

discussion, and I pointed out that we had a Civil Rights Act in the State of Michigan that applied to Southerners as well as to other minorities. He was a good guy, and he finally took it on his own initiative, and he got them a decent suite. So naturally, having gotten them in--I hadn't taken any position in the race at the time--I went over to see whether or not they were comfortable, and I found that they were sort of being treated like pariahs. And so I took them around and introduced them to everybody--I knew most of the people there--and they got along pretty well once they got known some. But still, it was not the happiest of occasions for them.

Then they wanted to have a chance to meet some of the Negro delegates to the conference because they were pretty short on knowledge of that kind, and I had them out to the house. I got hold of Charlie Diggs and quite a few people, George Weaver, and a number of other people who have since become quite prominent, and had them out to the house after one of the dinners or something. They discussed their views about things, all of which did not coincide, but nevertheless the people had an understanding.

I guess there were some people who didn't exactly like what I did in that connection, and some people called me some pretty bad names on account of it. But it wasn't a heck of a lot for anybody to do because I felt that that was the right thing to do, I felt it was the practical thing to do to establish contact. I didn't tell them what to think.

G: Were these also delegates to the convention?

T: Most of these men later became delegates to the Democratic national convention, yes.

G: And that was the very convention delegation from Michigan that rebelled apparently when it was learned that Johnson was going to be asked to--

T: No. There were people there from several states. This was a midwestern meeting of the Democrats, not of Michigan. There were many people from Washington, there were people there from Ohio. And it was a peculiar midwestern meeting because that so-called Midwestern Conference went all the way out to the West Coast, just about. It was kind of a preliminary meeting, you might say, of the liberals, if you want to call it that, riding under that name. I don't think that the Vice President got any votes out of that little meeting, but at least some of the people got to know one another.

G: What kind of an impression do you think he made?

T: He wasn't there.

G: Were they speaking for him?

T: Yes. Speaker Rayburn came and was there one day during the meeting, but the President was not there at all. You had Cliff, you had Warren Woodward, you had Gene Locke, and several other people--I can't remember right at the moment. So that was about the size of the thing.

As a result of this, of course, I became a little more closely interwoven with the Johnson campaign. India Edwards and I met, and we planned a few things together. I came to Washington several times, and I advised with him, and he took none of my advice.

G: Had you committed yourself?

T: I committed myself some time, I think about May or June. To be candid with you, I did not like the way that--what you may remember--that Mennen Williams first decided that he was going to be for Kennedy and committed the Michigan delegation without consulting anyone. He then assembled a group of Negro Michigan Democrats and flew them down on a plane, and there was lunch out to Senator Kennedy's house, and he answered the questions, and he satisfied everybody. Well, that didn't

strike me as the way to go about it, because I don't think that you support a politician based on his overall philosophy or something of that kind--you want to go into a little more detail about programming and who gets what and who does what. It looked like to me that although this was a fine thing, it wasn't anything there that anybody could use, and so I said, well, if this has been bought and sold on this basis, then that's no place for a sensible fellow to be. On the other hand, I looked at Mr. Johnson's record then very carefully, and I decided that he was a fellow who would meet the needs of the situation.

G: Who could do things.

T: Who could do things. I also found that he was a fellow who had never broken his word to anybody. All the things they said about him, nobody ever said that he lied to them about what he was going to do--you know, he never said he was going to do something and did something else. It never happened. So I rather thought that that was a more reliable rod to lean on than the other fellow, and here he was tested and tried and had already been in leadership. I thought that a thinking person would want to support him rather than Senator Kennedy, and so I declared in that direction.

G: In May?

T: Yes.

G: And when was the first time you actually met Johnson?

T: Oh, I had known him before. I don't remember. In the late 1950's, I would think.

G: Had you had much contact--?

T: No. Then I saw how the cards were stacked in Michigan, and I didn't even try to get on the delegation for Los Angeles because Michigan has a unit rule. With the unit rule, what good were my opinions, you see!

The labor unions--Mr. Reuther was committed, and the governor was committed, so that was it. So I sat out in the backyard and watched the proceedings.

G: Were you pleased with the proceedings?

T: It didn't bother me at all. It didn't bother me one way or the other. I thought that Senator Kennedy was going to have a lot of trouble with religion, and he did. And I figured that Johnson--when it happened--that that was the only chance he had. And I think that Mr. Kennedy and his father were very realistic-thinking, and this is why he got there, and this is why these whole eight years have occurred. Naturally, it so turned out that when everything was over, that the fellow who had--me--who had taken the stand that I had taken was in really better shape than all of the fellows who had followed along like sheep. And this is frequently the case in life. If you deal with the verities, you'll be there when the time comes.

I might say this. I had no intention of coming to Washington. Perhaps I should tell you this story. The way in which I got here was that I decided to take my wife to the Inaugural Ball. Here was an opportunity--the Vice President was very kind, and his office said yes, they would assemble all of the tickets and everything for us. Sure enough, they were there. And we came, and we attended the party for the Texas State Society.

When I was passing through the line, the Vice President shook hands with me and he said, "I've been waiting to see you. I want you to come down and see me in a few days." I said, "All right, thank you very much!"

Well, I didn't do anything about it. Then I got called again, and he said, "I thought I said 'come to see me.'" And so I said, "Well,

all right, I'll come tomorrow then."

I came down, and then that's when he handed me a draft of the order establishing the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, of which I knew nothing, and he asked me to look it over and see what I thought about it. He gave me about an hour, and he put me in the ceremonial office over there next to him. I looked it over and I said, "Gosh, I'd do a lot of things differently if I were doing it. There are no teeth in this thing. And where there are teeth, the teeth are too strong. You've got to cancel all of your relationships with somebody just because they've done one thing wrong, and you're going to hesitate to use a power like that because the punishment is greater than the crime." And he said, "Would you write it the way you want it?" I said, "Well, yes, I could do that. When will you need it?" He said, "How about tomorrow morning?" I said, "Well, I guess so, if you can get me a room here."

He got me a room down at the Willard Hotel, and I worked on it all that night. I rewrote the darned thing and I was in there the next morning; and in there were Abe Fortas and Arthur Goldberg. He had the three of us, put us together, and we worked there in the window in P-26. They agreed roughly with what I was doing and made a suggestion or two. Then we went in to see him, and everybody agreed on it, and then he asked me to go up and get a draft typed because it was all handwritten.

I went up to Abe Fortas' office, and I did it. For whatever it means to posterity, all of this talk about affirmative action, I put the word "affirmative" in there at that time. I was searching for something that would give a sense of positiveness to performance under that Executive Order, and I was torn between the words "positive action" and the words "affirmative action." And that is in the phrase, "The

contractor shall take affirmative action to carry out his obligations of equal employment." And I took "affirmative" because it was alliterative.

I also was very familiar with the history of the phrase, "equal protection of the law," which had been a phrase that had simply been used in speeches, but which, when put in the Constitution, began to develop a legal meaning and have a tremendous effect in the history of the country. And I thought that if I put a phrase in there that had philosophical content rather than a simple action word, that the addition of the adjective would in time come to give it a meaning in law that would not exist otherwise and would be a great protection for the rights of people.

G: What did you have in mind yourself by "affirmative action?"

T: I just told you. First of all, I wanted to carry out the idea that people should do something, but mostly I had in mind that it would come to be interpreted and come to have conceptual meaning with the passage of time, which is what is taking place. It has been in the courts now, a lot of speeches have been made on the subject, a lot of government departments are defining the actions that people have to take in order to take affirmative action, etc. So it's being clothed with meaning as people proceed to do this, that, and the other thing. But if there were no such phrase as that that was capable of being conceptualized, then these things could not be done. It's something about the nature of man that you have to think about.

G: You were helping to plant the seed.

T: It's more than a seed. You create a basis for the development of intellectual content, you see. It's not something which will grow exactly, but you create the thing and as people have to use it, it

becomes clothed with meaning. And that meaning that is developed consists of a group of specific actions. So affirmative action now means, for instance, that you don't sit there and have your employment door open--it means that you have to go out and use appropriate means to find minority people to employ. And without a word like affirmative there, or without some other word which can be turned into a concept and which can therefore be a basis for doing eight or ten different things, you couldn't get that done. And that's why I say it's in the nature of man that there has to be intellectual content to justify a whole series of activities.

G: Correct me if I'm wrong, but the way I'm interpreting some of this is that Mr. Johnson contacted you, and you helped to reconstruct the draft of this Executive Order, so the Executive Order emanated not from President Kennedy's office so much as Vice President Johnson's.

T: That's right. This is a fact. The first draft ever was drawn up by an assistant attorney general who is unknown. Then it was turned over to Vice President Johnson, because he was the man who was going to carry it out. Johnson hesitated to do it because he says a Vice President doesn't have any power. President Kennedy said, "You've got to do it because Nixon had it before, even though he didn't do anything; you're from the South, and if you don't take it, you'll be deemed to have evaded your responsibility. And so you've got to do it." So he [Vice President Johnson] says, "I don't have any budget, I don't have any power, I don't have anything, and so we've got to write it in such a way as to get that done." So we got that done by putting in Arthur Goldberg as a vice chairman. So you created an executive vice chairman responsible to the Vice President, but by making Goldberg vice chairman, then you had the Labor department, and you had budget, and you had means

of getting things done because you could use the Labor department people any time you wanted to. But if we had taken it out of a department, we never would have had any means to get anything done with. So that's the reason why we put it there.

It was well known that the Congress was not going to let anybody go beyond what Eisenhower had done in expenditures. You'll remember that there was this--I forget what that amendment is, but which prevented backdoor expenditures by the departments, the setting up of a committee such as this. It was a Russell amendment, wasn't it? Yes, I think that Senator Russell had put a rider on the original committee when Eisenhower first got started in an effort to destroy it. And the only thing that remained was this interdepartmental thing on that committee under which each department could contribute certain sums. This was still possible. And so this was the only legal way for the government to act in this connection, but at the same time everybody knew that this was not a true interdepartmental committee, but a permanent thing that was being set up; and, therefore, you had to go and have some sort of underlying understanding about how much you were going to spend and about how much you were going to do. Everybody also knew that that amount was inadequate, and that therefore the only way to get beyond that would be to use people, and not to use money. By having a Secretary of Labor who was friendly and willing to use people, then you could get the manpower to do the job.

G: That President's Committee on Equal Employment--that dealt with the government and the government contractors?

T: Right.

G: Was there any discussion as early as 1961 about economic activity outside of government?

T: Yes. Of course, there was talk about it, but we didn't have a law. That's another big story there about how we got that law passed.

G: I'd like to postpone that, if I can, and get to that later on.

T: But the thing at this time--and I'm talking about early February of 1961--the first thing we had to get was a workable instrument, and we had to figure out how to get funds to do it with. Now, I had no idea that I was going to be working here all the while I'm doing all of this.

G: You were just here because Mr. Johnson had asked you to come down.

T: That's right. And I came down. I paid my way and I paid my bills, whatever they were, and I stayed here three or four days. And finally we got a draft polished up the way he liked it. He said, "Fine." I went on back. Then he said he wanted to send me copies of it, and it came back from the Attorney General with some more changes, and I fought some of them. George Reedy and I kept in constant touch with one another. Finally, it was fine by me, and everything of the kind, and then I was told that the President was going to sign it on March 4. So I said, "Fine."

About a day or so before he signed it, the Vice President called me and he said, "Now, by the way, I've followed up what you and George have been doing, and I want you to come down here and be my counsel, and to follow up on this thing." I said, "I just don't see how I can do that at this time. You know, I've got a lot of bills. I've got a lot of responsibilities. My own business is just going pretty good." He said, "Well, you don't have to come but for six months, if you'll do that much, because I don't know anything about it." And I said, "I don't either." So he said, "Well, we'll learn together."

G: Do his learning by doing.

T: Yes. I agreed to do it. I got a leave of absence from the other fellows, and I came down, and I started to work. Of course, everything takes time. The first thing was to get the rules and regulations out. I consider that a very worthwhile accomplishment because I held hearings on them, and the hearings were very educational to the people who were going to have to do these things. I guess I heard a lot of talk, but we got a lot of people sort of lined up to see that we weren't trying to tear down the fabric of American society.

G: Setting up guidelines.

T: Yes. We got all of those done, and they never were attacked in the courts. Once you got over that, then you knew you had a basis. This went on, and it took a little more than six months to get everything squared away.

But finally, I think it was around February or March--well, Bobby Troutman had started Plans for Progress too, and he had had his troubles. But it was about February or March that the Vice President had said he'd sign no more Plans for Progress unless I approved them because it had developed that some of them weren't worth the paper they were written on, they were just absolutely meaningless documents. Bobby simply took the position that if a fellow was willing to say he was with the program, that was enough.

G: There was no guarantee attached to that, was there?

T: Not only no guarantee, there was no specification. Something worse--there was no specification as to what a fellow was going to do.

G: What actually then was it? Just a promise?

T: It wasn't even a promise in some cases.

G: What was it?

T: This is the question. I don't want to specify companies, but some of

them are really interesting documents to see--the original drafts which were long ago modified. But the ones that President Kennedy signed originally with those fellows were nothing--a lot of them.

But Bobby perhaps had a point. He may be a much wiser man than other people think because I think if he had tried to get these men to detail all of the things they were going to do, that they probably wouldn't have done anything at all. But he got them in. You see, that's why I say this area of intention is something that you've got to be very slow before you say what a man's intent was. And I don't know the answer to this question. I know that Bobby was motivated very largely because he didn't want that Lockheed plant stopped in Georgia, it was the biggest thing in the state. Senator Russell, I think, had just gotten a two billion dollar order for planes there. All of this was involved. At the same time, Bobby spent around seventy-five or eighty thousand dollars of his own money getting this job done, and he was only reimbursed, and that was after I became executive vice chairman, to the extent of around thirty-five or forty thousand. He made a permanent gift to the American government of around forty thousand dollars, and Bobby is not rich. He's not poor, but he's not rich, and he can't afford to lose forty thousand dollars, but this was what Bobby Troutman did. He was a doer too, and he didn't stop until he had something going. I think he deserves a great amount of credit. He's a fine American in my book.

At any rate, it's clear that what he did would not stand the light of public examination, however correct it may have been from a strategic standpoint, and therefore, this was the reason for the restriction.

But at any rate, I was getting ready to return to Detroit, and this terrible thing happened to Jerry Holleman in connection with the

Billie Sol Estes situation. He had borrowed a thousand dollars, as you know, from Estes. In fact it wasn't borrow, I guess it was pretty much a gift which Estes made to him because he was in the public service. I guess that if it had come from a very rich man who was impeccable, there wouldn't have been any question about it, but coming from a fellow who Jerry thought was rich and beyond reproof and yet who turned into a swindler, he got dragged down in it. I never met a more honest man than Jerry Holleman. It's one of the tragedies of our system that people like him get caught up in the swirl. Had he had a little more money of his own, none of these things would have happened and everything would have been just fine. Nobody bothers when a rich man uses somebody else's yacht although it may save him several thousand dollars, but when a poor man does, we say that he has been traduced.

But the upshot of the Holleman thing was that Steve Shulman was appointed acting executive vice chairman of the committee. Now there you had a situation in which you had Shulman as acting executive vice chairman, John Field as executive director, and myself as counsel. What had developed during the year 1961 was that the Vice President had lost confidence in Field's judgment. And I say, to be truthful about it, in his loyalty and integrity. I think in this he was perhaps to some extent mistaken. I had known John Field from the day he first came to Michigan because I was his lawyer, and I handled the deal under which he bought his first house. And that went back around 1945 or 1946. We had entertained each other and had been friends through the years. John, though, was a Northern liberal, and he did not agree with any kind of adjustments that had to be made from time to time to keep the Southerners from destroying this particular committee. I might add

that whatever adjustments were made were not made by Vice President Johnson but came from the White House and were frequently the product of Robert Kennedy's thinking. There are specific instances of this that can be picked up out of the records. But it was one of the things that always interested me--to see a policy, and I think this was what frustrated Vice President Johnson so much because sometimes he was asked to do something by the White House, and then if somebody criticized it, he had to carry the brunt of it all by himself. And sometimes a lot of the criticism came from the President's brother, who was privy to the initial instruction. But that's neither here nor there. And I think it was things like this that is the reason why so many people in government did not like Bobby. Again, I think that perhaps they were mistaken about this because actually, when you're serving a larger purpose and you've got to keep a country that has different ideas together, if you don't do things like this, you don't govern. This was one of the great lessons I had to learn, and it was a very shocking experience to find that the President of the United States frequently had to do something on one side, and then forget that he had anything to do with it, and then go criticize it on the other. But it still gets done. You just have to carry the brunt, but it gets done anyway. And if you didn't do it like that, it wouldn't get done. So what are you going to do! I don't think that either the Attorney General at that time or the President was at any particular fault--this is just an unresolved question in my mind. How do you do it otherwise! There ought to be a better way to do it, but people have been governing themselves now for a pretty good while here and in other countries, and they don't seem to have found the solution to it yet.

G: Are you suggesting that there was a difference in ideology or a difference in sentiment or difference in practical methodological approach between the Attorney General and the Vice President?

T: No. I think they were both practical men. But for instance, if the Attorney General wanted a certain contract in a certain Southern state not to contain the clause because the Senator from that state was adamant on a piece of legislation that he had to get through, and that it was going to go through the Defense department or through the Department of Public Works, Public Roads, or something, and he wanted his eyes shut to it--this is just an example, this is not necessarily the case--and then suppose that it was discovered that this happened and then he said, "Well, why did such-and-such a thing take place," but he'd gotten his legislation passed.

G: Let me see if I can reconstruct this to satisfy myself. You're saying that the Attorney General might in fact want to soften--

T: You could find a case, a case could arise in which he or the President or someone in the White House could be told that something very essential for the American people would never get out of the Congress unless. And he would know that this was so.

G: And the Vice President would then have to stand the public--he would then take the blame.

T: He would take the blame, and--

G: When in fact--

T: That's right. And because he was a Southerner, everybody would believe it.

G: He must have been very well aware of the role then that he was being forced to play.

T: I think everybody became aware. And the example which I have given you, I repeat, is not an exact case because--

G: It's hypothetical, but it's not unique. There are other--

T: There are cases involving the general principle, and I've taken the simplest type of illustration in order that you can understand it. But it is not my purpose to reveal the specific cases, and therefore, I'm not dealing in them. And above all, I don't want to do anything to desecrate the memory of either Robert or John Kennedy here, because I think they acted with the public interest in mind. I am dealing with the dilemma that public people face and not with any evil intentions on their part.

G: This is another hypothetical example, but what would happen in the case of a critical industry in which there might be some violations that would be found?

T: No. There never were any cases in which any violation was found in which the case was not carried through fully, fairly, correctly, and everything of that kind. No such situation ever existed.

G: None were anticipated and none ever existed?

T: None ever existed. We had cases in critical industries. One of the big cases we had was Pascagoula, that ship-building company down there which was bought by Litton--I forget its name just now. But they were building nuclear submarines down there, and we needed them. They were in the files, and I was going to cancel their contract had they not come around.

G: I was just wondering what would happen.

T: It never happened, but it was clear in our mind in advance that we were not going to let the fact that it was a defense contract or something of that kind stand in the way, because then we would be bluffed on everything. The minute we did it for one, then we'd have to do it for everybody, and we were making no exceptions.

G: Where do you draw the line?

T: That's right. Mind you, there was absolutely no trickery in the administration of this thing. There were one or two instances in which, based on a situation, there might either be a delay in something for a few weeks or something of that sort, or for very practical reasons, or it might be that one or two contracts, I think, got signed that didn't contain all the clauses they should have had, and probably more than one or two got signed and we didn't know about them. But I think that we did know about one or two. But still in those cases, even in those cases, there was also an understanding that they would in fact carry out the substance of the clause although they refused for reasons of their own to sign it, and that you might have a situation--. Now, suppose a fellow was also doing business with the State of Alabama, and the State of Alabama told the fellow that, well, I'm not going to do such-and-such with you if you give in to those people. You could have all kinds of situations arise, and in one or two instances it is my understanding--I did not know about any of this ahead of time and I can't say, for that matter, that the Vice President had personal knowledge of these, because I'm pretty sure that George Reedy and Walter Jenkins would probably have kept the knowledge of it from him and acted in his place, knowing what had to be done and at the same time protecting him from the knowledge of it.

G: In the day-to-day workings of this committee, was a lot of what was done done informally to try and prevent any kind of open conflict?

T: How do you mean? I don't understand what you mean.

G: In other words, if a case came up where there was a violation, would you then communicate with the people, would this try to be smoothed over?

T: Oh yes. You mean, was there an effort made at conciliation. Yes in every case.

G: In every case. Would you say that the committee was a success?

T: Yes, definitely.

G: How would you define that success?

T: It got people around to adopting as a standard the idea of employing minorities, which people had never adopted as a standard before. And I think the biggest thing was getting people to put it into effect on their own and believing that in some way or another they were connected with the effort.

For example, the telephone call which interrupted us a few minutes ago was from Milton Mumford, the chairman of Lever Brothers. And Milton Mumford is releasing Humphrey Sullivan, his top public relations man, to come down here and to work a year for Plans for Progress at the expense of Lever Brothers, paying his salary and everything, because, as he told me, he thinks that it's good for the program, and it's good for the country, and therefore it's good for Lever Brothers.

G: This, if I can interject my own opinion here, I have had some association with the Office of Economic Opportunity, and in that association I found that many of big business--large American corporations, large American industries--have become involved in this. Is this also true of small business? Are there any areas that have been resistant? I mean, are there any pockets that you've had particular difficulties with, that have not accepted this, whether it's sectional, geographical, or what have you?

T: Surely. Individuals make up their own minds. They can go on strike against you any time they want to, and they can have ten reasons, and if they don't tell you, you don't know it. And you can't watch everybody.

It's just like there's widespread violation of the income tax law in this country too. So you're always going to find that. This is why we have policemen and Treasury agents and all of the other things.

But the question which you asked me was what was Plans for Progress. Plans for Progress was a means of getting business to identify with this program as their program, so that they carried it out as a part of their program rather than because they were compelled to do it by law. And this is all the difference in the world.

G: They become the innovating--

T: They become participants and innovators, that's right. And a lot of people carp at this because it doesn't work out perfectly in every case in everything. That's true. But the point is, you have changed a man's mind from being negative and doing what he's doing under force to something he's doing.

G: And there might be an institutional change as well.

T: Of course. Exactly.

G: And to get to one of these institutional changes then. Did the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity--

T: May I say this while I'm on this. I'll refer to it briefly. When the civil rights law that Kennedy submitted did not have a section dealing with equal employment opportunity, that was added in the Senate. It was added and it was made possible because of the companies that were in Plans for Progress, which when the NAM and the chamber of commerce called meetings with the intent to oppose it, these men came in and said, "We are doing it already and it'll be better and easier for us if it becomes law, and everybody does it." And so if we had not developed what amounted to a political force, we couldn't have done it.

G: That anticipates the next question I was going to ask you. Did this

then lead to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under the 1964 Civil Rights--?

T: Yes, very definitely. And to go a step further, we even used these companies to get the public accommodations law enforced. If you'll remember, a committee was set up by Kennedy with the chap who owns the Hay-Adams--what's his name--that hotel chain, Jules Manger was one of the men selected by him and I've forgotten who the other head was, because he was a hotel owner, you see, and this was considered important, to get it done. Well, what we did then was to break down the entire country and wherever any of the companies in Plans for Progress had plants, we then--there were people loaned to us, Hills Zahn from AT&T, who was vice president of C&P, was loaned. And I had other people. I formed a committee there, and then we contacted the plant managers, and we told them to go into their Kiwanis clubs and their Lions clubs and all of the organizations to which they belonged with the message that this ought to be done. And we used Plans for Progress as a means of getting the word out and saying, "This is the standard that we want to carry out." Had we not done that, there would have been, I think, much widespread resistance to it. But if you'll remember, there was no resistance to it at all, much to the surprise of many of the civil rights leaders who tested it in Jackson, Mississippi, and they went to all of these places and tested it, thinking that they were going to get violations, and instead, they didn't get any violations at all.

G: What has been your own contact? You mentioned before your contact with Roy Wilkins. What has been your relationship or your contacts with various civil rights leaders?

T: Excellent.

G: Could you elaborate on any of them?

T: Just what I said. I kept in regular touch with Wilkins, with Young, when I formed Plans for Progress formally in the White House. I had Whitney Young there, and I had him make a talk to the people who were assembled there that day. I kept in touch with him. I told him what I was doing periodically; I told Wilkins periodically what I was doing. I consulted and advised with them, and I even kept in close contact with SNCC in those days. You may recall that during the 1964 Democratic convention when SNCC came there to picket and to disrupt, I went and talked with those people, and I actually had the leaders of it--Foreman and I forget the name of the other chap just now.

G: Farmer?

T: No, his name was Foreman. That's SNCC.

G: I was thinking about Farmer.

T: Farmer was at CORE, and I kept in close touch with Farmer. I even had Farmer to serve on a little informal committee with me. But I kept in touch with all of these organizations, they knew what I was going. If you'll look through their literature, you'll find that at no time was I ever criticized--that my actions were ever criticized by any of the civil rights organizations.

G: On the Equal Employment Opportunity actions that you were involved with, did you find a consensus of agreement on the part of civil rights leaders?

T: Yes. I would say there were some people who wanted something done a little faster or a little differently, but they saw what I was doing and they gave me my head. As a matter of fact, there was some criticism in some of the urban leagues about me, and Whitney Young even wrote a letter to all of his chapters telling them to cut it out.

G: Did you have any contact with Dr. King?

T: Yes. I had very good relationships with Martin.

G: I was going to ask you earlier--you were involved in the construction of the drafting of the Executive Order which set up the President's committee. Did you have anything to do with any other legislation, either under the Kennedy Administration when Mr. Johnson was Vice President, or when he became President?

T: I looked at the legislation, I did not write it. Had I written it, I would have written it differently. For instance, I would not have had a commission, I would have had one man run the equal employment opportunity effort.

G: One man.

T: One man.

G: Why is that?

T: Because any time you have a commission, you find people start playing politics with one another.

G: Do you think this is what has happened?

T: To a certain extent, I think. I think that the effectiveness of the commission would be greater if there were a single commissioner who could be held responsible.

G: One person to be held responsible?

T: Yes.

G: You were acting as a consultant--is that a legal counsel, or what were your duties?

T: I became counsel in 1961. Let me see, Holleman left in 1962. I became executive vice chairman in September of 1962 by appointment from Kennedy. I served as executive vice chairman from then through 1965. When I left the White House, the committee was abolished about two

weeks after I had left, and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance was substituted. By that time we had passed the civil rights law, but the decision was made to keep the two separate because Roosevelt had not shown initially that he had the kind of grasp of the thing--you remember, he was the first chairman of the commission, and he had not shown, in the minds of Mr. Wirtz and some others, that he had the kind of grasp that would be most effective. And so it was decided to keep that there.

In the meantime there was also established this Council of Equal Opportunity under Humphrey, which was supposed to coordinate all of the civil rights things in the government, and this was later abolished of course.

G: I wanted to ask you what other kinds of duties that you had when you were with the committee. I understand from the biographical material that I found on you that you had other duties as well.

T: Yes. I wanted to get a little involved in other things because, after all, I was a lawyer, and then I've always been a person that did more than one thing at a time. Abe Fortas was a great supporter of mine, he thought I was an excellent lawyer. He once wrote a note to the Vice President saying that I was the best lawyer to come here in many years.

G: That's pretty nice, coming from Mr. Fortas.

T: Yes, it was, and it was very nice of him to do, and I only found out about it by chance. So the Vice President started using me in other things. He had the Space Council, and he had the Smithsonian--those were his two basic responsibilities. He had a certain input into economic matters, so I did work on the economy and on international trade and on NASA--on Space--as well. People often wonder how I went to the Bank--

G: The Export-Import--?

T: Yes. And what the connection was. There were editorials written in the Detroit papers about it all, but there was a rationale behind it--I knew something about what I was doing. Again, this comes under the heading of duties that you have that I just simply don't reveal. It wasn't a formal duty of mine, but I became very much involved in a lot of things that weren't directly related to Equal Employment Opportunity.

G: Did you have anything at all to do with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964?

T: Very little, I would say that I had to do with that.

G: How about the Civil Rights Act of 1965?

T: This is what I said, that employment section. I did not lobby, but I not only had that section, but I used the contacts which I had to have them get senators and congressmen who were opposed to this concept to swing around.

G: I wonder if you can recall and give your impressions of the White House--the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

T: I think Mr. Kennedy had the most efficiently organized White House that I have ever seen. He had a group of people who were all very intelligent and very capable and personable and knew how to get along and to handle people very well. He did not have himself the benefit of the confidence of the Congress, and this plagued him throughout his entire administration. They were on guard. This was not his fault. But they used against him the fact that he had not been a good senator, that he had used his office as a springboard for the presidency rather than doing the work of the Senate, but I can assure you that if he had stayed there and done the work of the Senate, he never would have been

President. And, again, you see one of the dilemmas of life.

Lyndon Johnson stayed and did his work and never had a chance at it, and later on when he became President and tried to run the presidency simply by doing his work, he found that the American people didn't go for that. So this was a dilemma.

Mr. Johnson actually had people of perhaps an even greater level of personal intelligence than Mr. Kennedy. It's true that they were mostly Texans and Southerners and they were all taciturn and close-mouthed, and so people never really appreciated the intelligence of the men who made the decisions. But they were very able.

The greatest loss to the Johnson Administration was the loss of Walter Jenkins, who actually did the work of the President, you might say. He followed up everything, and he kept it all under his control, and he protected the President from all of those little decisions and everything else that are troublesome later on. When Mr. Jenkins resigned you had a situation there where no one could possibly ever have the same amount of confidence of the President that Walter had because Walter had been tried and tested through the years. And so this happened. I think that his problems really date from that time.

And I think that George Reedy, who had been the thinker for the President--George's job was to sit back and look at everything that was happening and write memos and furnish guidance. When he was put in as press secretary, he couldn't do that because he was there on stage twenty-four hours a day, had no time to think, couldn't keep up with what was going on, and became ineffective as director of the intellectual and of the philosophical processes of the administration. And this was a second loss.

So had Salinger stayed on and had Jenkins stayed on and had George Reedy been free to fulfill the unique function which was his, I think that we would be looking at a much different public temper. Because the fact of the matter is, I think when we look back at this administration you're going to find that there never was a more successful administration in history. Economic expansion continued abreast. Sure, we had inflation, but we didn't have price control. And we fought a war, and the people had more real income overall than they ever had before. And the Communists have not advanced one step, and we have recovered ground from them.

On the domestic side, his accomplishments are bound to go down in history not only where minorities are concerned, but education, our new immigration law, the care of the old, the treatment of women, the treatment of children, Head Start--all of those things, the investment in poor people which is the Poverty Act and all of those things, the awakening conscience of the American people to it.

We made a start toward the elimination of air and water pollution, and any number of things such as this. The continuation of the space effort. All of these things were done under Johnson. And these are bench marks in history that have set us on a course from which we can never retreat, and which we shouldn't retreat from.

G: Why is it, do you think, that the Johnson Administration then suffered such a bad image--it's interpreted in an unfavorable light to a large extent. I'm thinking back, for example, to 1967 when Luther King came out and virtually opposed the Johnson Administration on one specific area, the war in Viet Nam, simply because it was affecting the Poverty Program.

T: Martin had two reasons. I had a long talk with him. This was one,

but another thing, he also felt it was wrong. He felt it was morally wrong. Martin was a preacher and a man of God. He felt that we should not use big power politics, that we shouldn't be using Viet Nam and killing people as a means to hold back the Russians and Chinese and to protect Japan and Southeast Asia. And he thought that over a period of time it would work out. Other people felt that those people were not subject to the Christian ideal, and that they had had the experience with Hitler, and that if you let the Russians and Chinese have their way, that one day you would be in a situation in which it was too late. Other people felt that the Chinese had been busy calling us paper tigers and saying we wouldn't fight to protect yellow people, but we sure disproved that. And they don't call us paper tigers any more, they call us murderers. But one way or another, I think it's very clear to everybody in Asia that we will do what is required. I think that this is really clarified regarding Viet Nam, two things. One that they know now that we will act, and two, that we have preserved the trading area for the Japanese. If you permit that trading area to fall in the Chinese hands, you force the Japanese into the hands of the Chinese, and then you marry the Japanese industrial and technological capacity to the Chinese intentions. I think that that would be a very serious blow for this country and for western civilization. So like all wars, this one was fought pretty inexpertly, and the President acted on assurances from the Defense department and from the generals on the field, that this could be done within a year or two, and he thought he had a limited situation on his hands which kept growing. But one way or another, probably the main thing that had to be accomplished has now been accomplished. I don't think that it's necessary to hold the ground of Viet Nam or anything of that kind; the point has been made, and I think it will be a long time before any serious effort is made to do something with it.

INTERVIEWEE: Hobart Taylor, Jr. (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: Steve Goodell

DATE : February 14, 1969

G: This is the second part of the interview with Mr. Hobart Taylor. Mr. Taylor, last time we were talking, towards the end of the tape, about the general assessment of the Johnson Administration, and I didn't get a chance to ask you why it is, you think, that Mr. Johnson, and the administration, was so unpopular, particularly towards the beginning of 1968, and specifically around the time that he, in fact, on March 31 decided not to run again.

T: His unpopularity was a product of several factors, only one of which was new at the time, and that was the treatment which he received in the press, and what I might consider a campaign to destroy his credibility. Mr. Johnson was secretive by nature, and he had been secretive all these years that he had been in the Congress and in the vice presidency and then the presidency. He was a fellow who didn't announce anything until he got it accomplished--that was his fundamental approach to life. And people had complained about it a little, but it wasn't held up as a defect until 1968, which happened to coincide with a presidential year. I think that if you look very deeply into this, you will see the roots of human ambition, both in his own party as well as in the Republican party, that suddenly made the thing which he was doing so different from what they had been before.

Now, it's wise to remember that the so-called escalation of the Viet Nam war was a product of an agreement between himself and the members of the Congress. Both the leaders of the Democratic and of the Republican parties all supported the war. And Senator Dirksen was with him

right till the end in everything that he did, and so were the other Republican leaders. We have a Republican President now, and he is pursuing, so far--and I speak here in February not too long after he has been in--but he is pursuing the identical path of President Johnson, but the election being over there's no criticism. Boys are still being killed and negotiations are still stalled, and nobody seems to care. We are concerned today more with tax reform and paying for it than we are with the fighting and the killing in Viet Nam. So without calling names, and I recommend newspapers of that period for anybody to see, I think that we'll have to say that a large part of this unpopularity, so-called, of the President was the result of a campaign. I think if the President had gone to the people and had campaigned personally as fervently as these others had, it would not have been so serious, and he might not have faced the problem that he did.

I know, not only from conversation but in other ways, that President Johnson was acutely aware of the fact that he had two constituencies--one in this country and another overseas. And that if he satisfied his local constituency, he would not satisfy the people in Viet Nam and the other parts of Asia whom we were asking to fight to the death. He couldn't very well ask them to fight to the death for the American people, he had to ask them to fight for themselves. It was better for the conduct of the war to say that Americans were fighting to fulfill a pledge than that we were fighting to contain an enemy for our own purposes, because if we did that, we made the Asiatics pawns in the game, and that was not the thing to do.

So he had a very difficult situation that was pretty generally understood by everybody who was knowledgeable, but the fact that it was understood did not inhibit people from using it against him. I'm

not saying that the President is perfect or couldn't have done things much better. We all can do things much better. But if you're interested in the genesis of the action and the reasons for it, I would say that that's it. I'm dealing with a number of things which can't be proved--we're in an area of subjective thought. But knowing the people and having been around them for some seven or eight years and having dealt with them on many matters, I think that I'm not too far off the mark there.

G: In your own experience, and particularly while you were at the White House and you were in touch with civil rights leaders, did you find any diminution of support from them, or an increase in support because of the programs that he espoused?

T: The question is kind of general. You mean, would he have had the overwhelming majority of support from civil rights leaders in Negroes had he run in 1968? The answer is yes. There's no question about it. And if he ran in 1969, he'd still get it.

G: That the war hadn't affected--

T: I think you had a matter there of divided loyalty. I think that they all were sorry about the war, and they realized that the war was having an effect, and they knew that the war wasn't good for them. But at the same time, they realized what the President had done, and they were also loyal Americans. They felt that if he had done the things which he had done domestically, and if he pursued the war as he was pursuing it for the benefit of the country, that as good Americans--and I will say that I felt this way too--that as good Americans we should be loyal, even though it meant waiting and holding back and things of that kind because he was seeking to deal with the external danger.

G: You mentioned just a short time ago that perhaps more could have been done. Did you see any unfinished business in the Johnson Administration

of the Great Society?

T: Oh there's always unfinished business in everything. I think we don't have the time to go into it all. But how much of it can a government accomplish! You've got to have the cooperation of the people. And I think when the President stated that he would not run, when he renounced any further political ambitions, it was because this campaign had destroyed his effectiveness with the people as a leader. It does a President no good to fight other people for leadership. He can fight to get elected, but he can't fight for the hearts and minds of people, and this is what you've got to have if you're going to run a country. So the basic thing, and we see it today, is that so many people in this country are unwilling to grant everybody educational opportunity on an equal basis, and you're never going to have peace in the United States until education is granted equally. This is the foundation rock of it all.

G: And it was the Johnson Administration that provided the legal means to provide this.

T: One of his great efforts in his passage of the Civil Rights Bill and the set-up which he built in health, education, and welfare, the withholding of federal funds from schools which didn't integrate, and all of the rest of this program was aimed at that. And I think you'll find that he always said that if he had any title, he'd like to be known as the "Education President," because he saw education as a way to the solution of our problems. Perhaps this is an oversimplification, but certainly I can't think of any factor that is more fundamental.

G: Did the President, when he was Vice President, ever talk to you in broad or general or philosophical terms about his aspirations as President, or the civil rights movement, or any of the things with which you were involved?

T: Yes.

G: Could you be specific?

T: Without being specific, if I may, I would say that the President had a very real and deep concern for this whole matter of civil rights; and that he felt it perhaps more personally and more fervently than any man that I have ever known who was in the White House. I knew President Roosevelt and President Truman and President Kennedy, and of course President Johnson--I knew them all pretty well--and of course I knew President Johnson best. But certainly none of those other men had it down in their stomachs in the same way. They were all good men, and I'm not taking anything away from them, but Lyndon Johnson actually felt ashamed for some of the things he had to do on the way up.

G: As a congressman?

T: As a congressman and senator. And he knew that he knew better because he had had an awful lot of personal relationships with Negroes. He always felt that his initial election to the Congress was the result of the Negro vote, and that they tipped the balance--the women and the Negroes tipped the balance for him when he ran the first time when he had run second in the initial primary and won in the run-off. That's a fact worthy of checking. He felt he owed them something. He felt that he had not done properly with some of the stands that he had had to take on anti-lynching legislation and other things of that kind during his early years in the Congress. And he was determined. That comes out very clearly in his State of the Union speech in 1965 when he says that there were a lot of things that he'd been intending to do and now, at last he was President and he had the power, and he was going to do them. And that's about as close to a direct statement as you'd

ever get out of a fellow like Lyndon Johnson on his intentions. And then he laid out his program. So I think that anybody who examines that speech will see pretty clearly how he thought.

Now if you want to know in a little closer detail how he really felt about racial issues and what needed to be done, he went up to Gettysburg in 1963, I think, and he made a speech there a hundred years after the original Gettysburg speech of Abraham Lincoln, and it was a short speech. But again, I commend that to the reader if you want to get in a few words what he was thinking.

G: Do you think that he was understood?

T: I think he was understood by people who wanted to understand him. But the East and the West are different. And the people in the East--they like for you to announce it all and explain it to them in terms of a fine theory and then go set out to make it come true. This is the intellectual process. And then they have other values. They like for you to be quiet, and they like for you to have a soft voice, and they like for you to love chamber music, and a lot of other things of this kind, and have a little wine with your meals and be genteel, and go to Europe for your vacations. The people in the West are a little different and they like hunting and riding and fishing and shooting--I'm generalizing but I'm still getting that something, so this is all this lack of style. Well, it's different ways of living. He came out of ranch country where it was a virtue in keeping your mouth shut rather than in talking, and therefore that he kept his mouth shut, you figured a fellow out for what he was by what he did, and not by what he said. So we were dealing with entirely different standards, and I think this was the problem that he faced.

G: So much of the criticism then, you think, was superficial and directed at style and not at substance?

T: That, and I think a great deal of it was--now, he had certain other habits which could have been improved upon. He sometimes criticized people hastily, he was sometimes lacking in graciousness, but I generally found this amusing because he wasn't real serious and it was a way of speech and a habit of thought that to somebody who wasn't prepared to be offended could have found to be rather pleasant and colorful. But I think that his main problem stemmed from the fact that every time he said or did something, it was criticized and questioned and turned over and everything, and so he began to get on the defensive, and so he was more cautious and careful. Finally we drove the President of the United States into a box, because if he doesn't have popular support, he can't operate his job. I certainly hope it doesn't happen to anybody else.

G: Did you have much of an opportunity at the White House to observe the workings of the White House staff and its relationships with the President?

T: Yes. I was a member of it.

G: Surely. As a random selection, who would you have considered to have been the most important people there in terms of their contributions, their ideas, their efficiency and so forth?

T: I don't think that that's the sort of question that I'd like to answer.

G: Would you consider it to have been a very productive--

T: I would say this. That during his tenure in office, Walter Jenkins was the most indispensable man in the country, and that--

G: I think on the earlier tape you mentioned that Reedy was one of them.

T: But I just say that there's no comparison with anybody's contribution to that of Walter Jenkins, and I don't think anybody would want to be compared with what Walter did. It was just an unfortunate thing for

the country when he was obliged to leave the White House.

G: From what you said a little while ago, I take it then that you don't see any shift in Mr. Johnson's private aspirations in terms of civil rights. It was a public stance that he had had to take because of the changing constituencies from congressman, senator, to President.

T: That's right. And the test is going to come for the non-believers during 1969 and 1970 and so forth. It's my belief that you're going to find Lyndon Johnson just as active in promoting the cause of civil rights now that he's out of the presidency as he was while he was in there. That will sort of put the seal on that one, won't it!

G: This seems to put a Southern representative or senator or congressman in a very difficult position.

T: It depends on which Southerner it is, and it depends on how important he is, and it depends on how much guts he has got. You take Jack Brooks, who's a congressman from Beaumont there, he's full of guts and fire, and he has got constituencies, some of which are pretty bad. Jack has been able to stand up--they hurt him a little bit this last time, but it was mainly because they moved his district. But he's still there and he's going to stay there, and he's still fighting along, and you've got other congressmen who are able to express themselves.

G: Mr. Taylor, with your permission I'd like to go back to a couple of questions that I didn't have a chance to ask you the first time I talked to you. I wonder if you'd mind talking a little bit about the 1964 convention, specifically with reference to the challenge that was made by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party. If you want me to be specific--.

T: I don't mind, but ask me the question.

G: Let me start by asking you this. Could you describe what your knowledge is of the President's attitude then towards what might have been a very serious floor fight between the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party and the Democratic regulars from Mississippi?

T: Let's begin by saying that the floor fight was not the important thing. What we were trying to do was to build a unified party in Mississippi. We couldn't build a unified party in Mississippi, which was essential to the growth and development of the Negroes in Mississippi. If we could get the whites to take the Negroes in and for them to work as a unit, then we would be on the path to progress. But if we just simply supplanted the whites with the Negroes, particularly in the situation where the legalities were on the side of the whites, all we were doing was just stirring up something that is bad socially and bad economically and bad for the country. And the floor fight pales into insignificance when you consider the basic issues that were involved in that kind of thing.

We'll have that problem with the South a long time. We had loyalty pledges back in 1952, and we've had the problem in 1956 and 1960 and have had it in every convention. We were changing rules and trying to get it set up in such a way that this would not happen again. So by way of doing it, we had to work out a mechanism, if possible, under which these people could get together. We were also sensitive to the moral position of the Negroes of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, and we would have liked to have done more about it if we could, and this is the reason why we let things go as far as they did go in order to give them some dignity and some semi-recognition and things of that kind. But never at any time could we have done anything different from what was done.

G: Were you able to observe any split between the delegates within the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party at the convention?

T: I don't remember whether there was a split. There were differences of opinion as to what they should do--yes, that was. And I spoke with many of them, and many of them thought that the preliminary challenge before the Credentials Committee had met the needs of the situation, and there were others who felt that they should go further. This is natural any time you have a group of people.

G: Do you feel that it's possible to bring together the elements that were represented in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party and the regular Democratic party?

T: Surely, it's possible. All things are possible.

G: Do you see it in the near horizon?

T: I don't know enough about it to know, but I don't see where it's impossible or really too difficult. You've got to have a little support for your position from outside.

G: Was this of major concern to Mr. Johnson at the time?

T: It was a concern, but I think that the selection of his Vice President was his major concern. We knew we had the election locked up. When the Republicans nominated Goldwater, it was all over then.

G: That was the feeling in the White House.

T: Everybody knew--we knew--we were politicians. We knew.

G: Mr. Taylor, I'd like to thank you very, very much for a very informative interview.

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By Hobart Taylor, Jr.

to the

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