

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 7, 1979
INTERVIEWEE: STROM THURMOND
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: Senator Thurmond's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

- G: Senator, you were elected in 1954 and Lyndon Johnson needed your vote very badly to organize the Senate. I think with you voting as a Democrat it gave him a one-vote majority. Did he talk to you before you came up to Washington to find out your intentions?
- T: I don't recall his talking with me himself. I think probably somebody else talked to me about it. But I had told the people when I ran that I'd vote with the Democrats to organize the Senate, so that was well settled. My word is my bond. Now when Senator [Frank] Lausche came in, it may have been a little different because he had everybody in suspense as to which way he was going to vote. I think his vote might have changed it, too. I believe he came two years after I did. It was that close.
- G: Did the Republicans try to get you to vote with them?
- T: I don't recall that they did. There may have been some suggestion by someone, but I ran on a write-in as a Democrat. One thing I didn't like was that the Democratic Campaign Committee furnished money to my opponent, Senator [Edgar A.] Brown, when I was a Democrat, too. But he was a Democratic nominee, so I could understand that because

Thurmond -- I -- 2

they felt the nominee would be sure to be elected. At that time the nominee would normally have been elected but in view of the special circumstances arising we were able to win the race.

Senator [Burnet R.] Maybank died September 2, 1954 and most people felt they had time to hold a primary to select his successor. But the executive committee met and selected Senator Brown. I had somebody to suggest to me that I offer before the committee, but I didn't do it. I told them that I thought the people ought to select the nominee in the primary. Senator Brown was selected and he was the nominee and ran as the Democratic nominee. It was too late for me to run then as an independent. There was not sufficient time for me to get on the ticket as an independent and it wouldn't have been any use for me to run as a Republican because the feeling was too strong, I think, to elect any Republican at that time. That was 1954. So I ran on a write-in, but stated I would vote with the Democrats to organize.

G: After you came to the Senate, did you have an opportunity to observe Lyndon Johnson's style of leadership as majority leader? How would you characterize it? How did he differ, say for example, from other leaders that you've served with?

T: Well, let's see now. I was elected to the Senate in 1954 and he became vice president in 1961. Although I became a member of the Senate on Christmas Eve, 1954, I didn't come here actually physically until January of 1955. From 1955 through 1960 he was the Democratic leader. Yes, of course I had opportunity to observe him at that time as Democratic leader.

Thurmond -- I -- 3

G: What was his style? What were his techniques of getting votes?

T: His style was to gain all the power. He was chairman of just about every committee on the Democratic side that had power. A lot of senators didn't like that but they didn't say much because he was in the position to help them get better committees if they wanted them, or to help them in various other ways, such as getting bills through the Senate. He was chairman of the Steering Committee; he was chairman of the Policy Committee; he was chairman of just about every committee there was in the Democratic power structure. I was a little surprised to see that one man wanted that much power, but what he was driving at, of course, was to be in a position to use that power to help him exercise dominant control of the Senate. Because of his tremendous power, when there was discussion with me about committees, well, the whole committee didn't confer with me, he conferred with me. You may recall that I resigned in April, 1956 in order to put the election back in the primary, which I promised the people I would do if I were elected to the Senate. This would give them a chance to vote in the primary. I told the people when I was running I would do that. So I was here only about fifteen months before I resigned. Then I was out of the Senate from April until after the general election in November.

I desired to be on the Armed Services Committee but I did not get on the Armed Services Committee until about 1958. Senator Dick Russell was chairman of the Armed Services Committee at that time. I soon learned that Lyndon exerted a tremendous influence and Dick Russell did, too.

Thurmond -- I -- 4

I recall there was a vote that came up about the Marines and I voted with the Eisenhower Administration on the question--I was a Democrat then. I thought the Eisenhower Administration was right on it, whatever the question was. After the vote, Lyndon Johnson ran back to my seat and said, "Don't you want to be on the Armed Services Committee?" I said, "Yes, I would like to be." And he said, "And you voted the other way here." I said, "Yes, I did." He didn't say any more. I learned later, a day or two later, that Dick Russell had some comment about my vote, too. Well, I didn't like that, because I am the kind of fellow when they could not intimidate and did not intimidate, and they soon found it out. But they were using pretty high pressure tactics. Dick didn't talk to me himself but I got the word through somebody else, from him in an indirect say, that he did not like the way I had voted. I didn't admire that at all, in either of them.

In 1958 a vacancy arose on the Armed Services Committee. Lyndon called me and asked me then if I wanted to go on the Armed Services Committee. I was on the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, and I was on the Government Operations Committee and [Interstate and Foreign] Commerce Committee. I said, "Yes, I would." He said, "Are you willing to give up the Labor and Public Welfare Committee and Government Operations to go on Armed Services?" I said, "Yes, if necessary I'll do that." He said, "Well, it will be necessary to give up both." If I had known then what I later heard had taken place I would not have given up but one. But he took both. I learned later that George Meany had told him that he had to get me off that Labor and Public Welfare

Thurmond -- I -- 5

Committee. [Barry] Goldwater and I both were on that committee and were causing too much trouble, and [Meany] said, "You've got to get that s.o.b. off the Labor Committee!" I was told that was the reason they offered to put me on Armed Services at that time instead of making me wait a little longer in order to punish me for not going along with them on everything. At any rate I did go on Armed Services and have been on there ever since.

G: Why did he put you on the Labor Committee in 1957? Do you know?

T: I don't know. I don't know just why he put me on it. I was a little surprised he did so.

G: Was it to get you off Public Works, do you think?

T: No, I was on Public Works.

G: You stayed on?

T: Yes. When I came here I went on Commerce, and he told me he was going to give me three committees: Commerce, which was a good committee; Public Works, which is more of a minor committee in a way--during that period, however, the interstate [highway] system was written and I was on the subcommittee that wrote it and the full committee that approved it in the spring of 1956. I have always been proud I had an active part in that bill which was fashioned by the Public Works Committee. I had no particular interest in the Labor and Public Welfare Committee and was surprised to be placed on it but a lot of senators didn't want to go on it. Since the Democratic nominee Senator Brown was not elected and I was, maybe they just felt they did not have to give me the committee I preferred. But Commerce was a good committee. Lyndon

Thurmond -- I -- 6

later proved very friendly to me, and during my service in 1955 and 1956, I worked with him the best I could, whenever I could. There were times however, when I would have to go against him. As time went on I found myself going more with the Republicans than the Democrats. That is the reason in 1964 I changed parties. Senator Johnson was a dynamic and able fellow. I never could tell exactly, though, about him and what he was planning, because I was not in his inner circle.

G: Did he move to the left, do you think, in the mid-fifties or late fifties?

T: He became more liberal in the late fifties in the Senate. I remember in 1960, when he ran for president, I supported him over Kennedy at the convention. I made a speech at the Democratic Convention to the South Carolina caucus--in Los Angeles at that time--and Fritz Hollings was for Kennedy. We both made speeches to the South Carolina delegation for our candidates. I cited Lyndon's Senate record and showed it was much more conservative than John Kennedy's Senate record, and the delegation decided to vote for Lyndon as I had recommended. But later when he became president, after President Kennedy was assassinated, he took a different turn and went further to the left.

He advocated, for instance, the so-called Civil Rights Bill of 1964, so many provisions of which I felt were unconstitutional. I was not against blacks, but I am for the Constitution. Lyndon was running for re-election that year. That seemed to be a pure political play on his part to carry the black vote in the big cities of the North. Since he was from the South, although he called Texas from the West--he

Thurmond -- I -- 7

always spoke of Texas as being a western state; well, it is somewhat both--but at any rate, there was a question as to how he would feel about the so-called Civil Rights Bill. In my opinion it was clearly unconstitutional and I was opposed to it. The Democrats had gone so far to the left and Goldwater was more conservative, so I changed parties and supported him on the Republican ticket that year, 1964. Ever since I had come to the Senate, about two-thirds of the senators on the Republican side were conservative and thought more like I did, and two-thirds of the senators on the Democratic side were far out to the left. Philosophically, I just felt more at home in the Republican Party. If I had changed parties sooner, however, I don't think I might not have survived, because our State of South Carolina was so strongly, through custom and inheritance and atmosphere, Democratic.

I supported Johnson in 1960 at the convention over Kennedy, and was surprised when Johnson agreed to accept the vice presidential nomination. He had promised us he would not do so, but he did. I guess that was the best thing for him, of course, since it turned out as it did.

Now in 1965--I might mention that, too--after he was re-elected president, he advocated the so-called Voting Rights Bill. Well, as governor I had always favored everybody voting. I had encouraged the blacks to vote and the whites and everybody. I didn't see why that bill was fair at all. They seemed to work out a formula that would put the states under it that voted for Goldwater. There was only one state, I believe, that wouldn't have fallen in that category. The

Thurmond -- I -- 8

rest of the states, though, had voted for Goldwater that went under that bill.

People down our way all felt it was just a reprisal because Johnson didn't carry our state then. I went for Goldwater, spoke for Goldwater. We carried the state for Goldwater in 1964. That bill, simply because less than half of our people who were registered actually voted, put us in a position where we had to come to Washington with hat in hand to the Justice Department to get permission to pass any law down there concerning elections. That was a completely unreasonable piece of legislation, and still is. Now if they would apply that nationwide it would be all right. But just to pick out those states like they did, under the formula they devised, I thought was very unfair and very unjust.

G: In 1957 when the Civil Rights Bill was being debated in the Senate, could you see the influence of Lyndon Johnson in persuading the other senators not to join you in that filibuster?

T: Oh, I think there was no question there, in my judgment, that Dick Russell was a good man in a lot of ways, and he was the leader of the southern bloc. But I think Johnson had worked with Russell so much and gotten so close to him and that Russell convinced Johnson he ought to be president. In order to try to get elected president, I understood Lyndon Johnson had told him he had to pass the Civil Rights Bill. I think Russell didn't fight it as hard as he ordinarily would have if that had not been the case.

Thurmond -- I -- 9

The southern senators then met and agreed as a whole that they would not have an organized filibuster. But it was specifically stated by Russell at that meeting that any senator could speak as long as he wanted to. The day I started that long speech--I started about nine o'clock at night I believe--shortly after lunch that day I went to Russell and I told him, "You know, I'm not satisfied with the action the southern senators took here, not having an organized filibuster, because it's right at the end of the session and if we have an organized filibuster I don't believe they could break it. We might stop this bad piece of legislation." It was bad. So I did speak twenty-four hours and eighteen minutes to try to stop it.

But Russell said, "Well, the southern senators have already acted. You can speak as long as you want to." I said, "Won't you call them back and consider again?" So I suggested Senator Russell call the southern senators back and consider an organized debate. But he said that he couldn't do that, that they had already acted, and said, "You're welcome to speak as long as you want to anyway. Just speak as long as you want to." Well, I was disappointed that he wouldn't call them back, but as time went on I could see he and Lyndon were very close. He was trying to help Lyndon get elected president and I thought I saw through the situation.

At any rate I did speak and spoke twenty-four hours and eighteen minutes. Now, what did I speak on? The issue I spoke on, if you get it and read it, was the right of trial by jury. The Constitution says if anybody is charged with a crime they shall have a right of trial

Thurmond -- I -- 10

by jury. It doesn't say whether the crime is small or big or what the punishment is. The bill I spoke against was a bill before the Senate which Lyndon had worked out with the House members to try to insure a civil rights bill. There was a lot of difficulty in getting it worked out. Anyway, they came in with a bill that provided that in case of a punishment there for contempt under those cases, civil rights cases, that if the punishment was three hundred dollars or more, or forty-five days imprisonment, that a defendant would get a trial by jury. If the punishment was less than three hundred dollars or less than forty-five days, he would not get a trial by jury. Well, the Constitution made no such exceptions.

I understand the Supreme Court, I believe they later heard the case, and they held the act constitutional--that was the Warren Court so you wouldn't be surprised--but by a split decision. If that were before the Court today I'm not too sure that the Burger Court would take that same position. Because I don't see how they can get around the constitutional provision which is just as plain as can be, and anybody who can read English can read it, that says anybody charged with a crime shall get a trial by jury. So that's what I spoke on.

Lyndon got upset, I think, over that speech but he saw there was nothing he could do then so I spoke on. As soon as I finished speaking they passed the bill, of course. They had enough votes to do it.

G: In 1956 you introduced or originated the Southern Manifesto, or what became called [the Southern Manifesto].

T: 1956.

G: Right. Did you sense there a move by the original drafting committee to slow that down? I think Senator Russell was on that drafting committee.

Thurmond -- I -- 11

T: He was on the last one, I believe. I don't believe he was on the first one. He and I were both on the last one, but I wasn't on the first one either.

G: Do you recall who was on the first one and if they did in fact try to [slow it down]?

T: Well, I don't recall offhand who was on the first one. I have that original manifesto in my papers and that would probably show. A committee was written to do it and then some of them felt it ought to be rewritten. I brought in a proposed draft and they followed that to a great extent in the first one. Then in the second one they still followed it to a great extent, but changed some of it. I remember Russell was on the last one, Fulbright may have been, too. I don't recall just now who all they were.

D: Do you know if any of the senators approached Lyndon Johnson about signing that and the reasons he gave for not signing it?

T: He was approached about signing it, but he said that he was majority leader and couldn't sign it.

G: Do you know who approached him?

T: I don't recall right at the moment. It may be that Dick Russell approached him. Dick generally, as leader of the southern bloc, would speak for the group. But I'm not quite sure whether he was the one or not, but we were told that was the reason. I'm pretty sure it was Dick Russell who told us that Johnson couldn't sign it because he was majority leader.

G: During the late fifties there were several pieces of legislation to

Thurmond -- I -- 12

curb the powers of the Supreme Court. One was the Butler-Jenner bill. He managed to sidetrack that.

T: What year was that?

G: I believe that was 1958, yes, 1958. He managed to substitute a much milder bill by Senator [Styles] Bridges. Do you remember how he did that?

T: I don't recall the details on that but I know he never did want to affect the Supreme Court very much. Justice [Hugo] Black, I think, had helped him come to the Senate, seated him more or less in the contest where he won by eighty-seven votes, I believe.

G: How about HR3, that I think Howard Smith had introduced?

T: Let me see now. I remember that bill. We carried it one night and Lyndon adjourned the Senate before a motion could be made to reconsider and then kill it. We had the votes that night to carry it. It did carry. Then the next day it was reconsidered and he had switched enough votes to stop it.

G: Do you know who he leaned on or how he did that?

T: I don't recall now just who switched votes or who was asked to be absent. I was told that some of them had not switched but they agreed, in order to pacify him, to just not be there. But that was a very important vote. [John] McClellan worked hard on that and I worked hard on it; he and I were the main two. We tried to get that bill passed and we got it passed that night. But the next day he switched it around.

He was about the best I ever saw at maneuvering and carrying his point. While he had good leadership qualities, I have often thought

Thurmond -- I -- 13

about why he wanted all that power. By putting senators on committees and by doing everything that had to be done, he could have things done at his direction more or less. He just had unusual power, more than any leader has ever had while I have been in the Senate. Whether you liked it or not, that's the way he operated.

G: It seems like the liberals were the ones who ultimately objected to this rather than the conservatives. Why was this?

T: Well, they probably did. The southerners were the conservatives in the Democratic Party. They felt it was better to have a southerner even if it were Lyndon than not to have a southerner as majority leader. A lot of the southerners bickered and objected to the way he operated and objected to all the power he was accumulating under himself, but I think they still felt it would be better to have him. They thought if he got elected president, too, that it would be to the advantage of the South to have him. But, of course, after he got to be president he didn't show the South many favors.

G: Do you remember the Lewis Strauss nomination?

T: Yes, I do. I spoke for it.

G: There again that was a close vote.

T: A very close vote. [Clinton] Anderson of New Mexico led the fight against it. And Lyndon helped to defeat it.

G: Do you know how that defeat came? Who the crucial senators were?

T: No, I don't recall who the crucial senators were on that particular matter.

Thurmond -- I -- 14

G: I've gotten some indication, for example, it was Margaret Chase Smith that he persuaded.

T: Well, she voted against him to the surprise of the Republicans and those Democrats who were supporting him, too. I was told that Lyndon got to her some way. I don't know. I think somebody said she wanted some help with a navy yard up in her state or adjoining state. It may have been the naval yard in New Hampshire, right close to Maine. But I wouldn't attribute that motive to her. I just don't know. But I know she did vote against him and that shocked everybody. I believe that may have been the deciding vote. It was awfully close. That could have been the deciding vote.

G: Was it common that he would hold up a bill that another senator was really interested in, say a project for his home state, and get it right to the point of passage and hold it up until he got that senator's vote on something he wanted?

T: I wouldn't say that was necessarily the case but I think he followed most any tactics in parliamentary maneuvering to accomplish his goals.

G: Did he ever use that on you, hold up a bill that you were really interested in until he saw how you voted on something that he wanted you to vote for or vote against?

T: I don't know that he did especially. I remember one time when I first went to the Senate he told me--it was rather amusing as I thought back over it--"I won't call on you many times to help me out. You go on and vote your convictions, except when I do I want you to help me out." Well, he never would call on me unless it was a close vote and

Thurmond -- I -- 15

he had to have my vote, or needed it to pass what he wanted to pass or stop what he wanted to stop. Of course, I didn't pay any attention to it. I just voted my convictions as I saw it. That's the reason I didn't please him a lot of the time.

But we got along nicely. I always liked him, his personality. He has a lovely wife. She is one of the finest women I've had the pleasure of knowing. She has been of tremendous benefit to him. She is an outstanding woman. I don't believe any woman was ever closer to her husband and helped him more than she helped Lyndon. His older daughter also helped him quite a bit in the White House. She was a good hostess, too, and married Mr. Robb, now lieutenant governor of Virginia. In my opinion the younger daughter wasn't as politically inclined. I never did see her very much around the White House--at least she wasn't as active as Lynda, the older daughter. But Mrs. Johnson was a tremendous asset. I don't think he could ever have been president without her.

G: I've got a long list of questions here. I don't want to take up too much time though. Senator, you passed some important pieces of legislation that you sponsored in the fifties, and I was going to ask you about some of them. One was a bill to return to individual states a large amount of the jurisdiction governing the use of federal lands in those states. Do you remember that? I believe that was in 1958.

T: I would have to check the record now. I've been around here so long and had a part in so much legislation and so many things until I don't recall the details. There's one thing. If you ever got Lyndon on

Thurmond -- I -- 16

your side, and if he was really trying to help you, you'd pretty near got your legislation passed. That again goes back to the tremendous power he wielded over the senators. As I said, it was at least partially because of the power he held over them, on committees and appointments and favors and everything like that.

G: Did he play a role in the highway legislation, to establish the interstate highway system?

T: Well, Senator Harry Byrd came before our Public Works Committee in 1956, and opposed that bill on the method of financing and helped to defeat it. I had such tremendous respect for Senator Harry Byrd, Sr., as I have for his son, Harry Jr. I felt the same way he did. He made a very convincing argument. A general who was representing President Eisenhower wanted to issue a lot of bonds and put the country way in debt, in debt many generations ahead maybe. We went along more with the Byrd position than we did the Eisenhower position. But we did get the bill through.

G: I know you were very interested in import restrictions on plywood that were in keeping with your. . . .

T: That's right. That's right, and textiles, too.

G: Did LBJ help you at all on that, either one of those?

T: I don't recall particularly that he was especially active in that. But I'll say this for him, if there was something he could do to help a senator without interfering with his goals and his positions, then he would do it because he would feel like he was wrapping up a loyalty

Thurmond -- I -- 17

to himself. I don't recall any specific work he did. He may have, now it's been so long.

G: Do you remember the Area Redevelopment Bill? That was the depressed areas bill.

T: I remember a bill coming before the Senate.

G: You opposed that and I think it was ultimately beaten by another close vote.

Did Lyndon Johnson and Everett Dirksen have a good working rapport?

T: Let me see now. When did Everett become leader?

G: I believe that was 1959, wasn't it?

T: It probably was.

G: [William] Knowland ran in 1958.

T: I think so. I think they had a good working rapport as far as I know, just like he did with [Mike] Mansfield. They wanted that civil rights bill passed. It was written in Dirksen's office. Mansfield just let him take the lead in order to help get it passed. That must have been the 1964 Civil Rights Bill. Lyndon was president then and Dirksen, I guess, was minority leader. Dirksen didn't do much about it to let him take the lead so he, I believe, had been in opposition to some of those things until Lyndon called him down to the White House, I think, to take the lead. So he took the lead and they finally got it through.

G: How about the bill to set up the space agency? Do you recall his work on that?

Thurmond -- I -- 18

T: I favored that bill. There was a bill out of the Commerce Committee that was a very important bill that he favored. And he favored a lot of progressive measures. I favored such measures, too, where the federal government had the authority to do it.

Now in 1958--let's see, he wasn't president until 1963--in 1958 the education bill was passed. I opposed that. The word education is not even mentioned in the United States Constitution and I didn't know what authority the federal government had in that field. The bill passed but, just as I do today, I voted on the merits of each piece of legislation. But that was a great victory for Lyndon Johnson to get that through.

G: How did he do it, do you know?

T: They called it the National Defense Education Bill. I was strong for defense and Lyndon was good on defense, too. As I say, there were a lot of things that we were together on, and I tried to help him any way I could where I thought it was proper. But that was an education bill. It was primarily an education bill and it plunged the government into the whole education field and they've been into it ever since. I think it was a great mistake, because along with that federal government entering the field [it] has brought federal controls, as I predicted it would.

As you know now, right at this very moment they're threatening to take away millions of dollars from the University of North Carolina because they haven't met certain provisions they have about employing minorities on the faculty or entering them in the student body. I

Thurmond -- I -- 19

thought it was a great mistake for the federal government to enter that field, but it did enter it and it's costing a lot of money today. It would have been much better if we'd just turned the money over to the states down at the state level where it's collected. If we wanted to give money to the states to help them out, turn it over rather than let it come to Washington, go through the bureaucrats, apply controls, and then the toll it takes in going back down. It takes about 25 per cent of the dollar to come up here and go back, and it goes back with controls, too. Now the bureaucrats determine what South Carolina needs, whether it needs more reading or more vocational rehabilitation or whatnot. Instead of the people down there determining that, the people here in Washington are making those judgments which I think is a mistake.

I think Lyndon was so anxious to get that through, though, as an accomplishment in getting ready to run for president. It pleased the minorities and pleased the liberals and pleased the teachers, and those are big blocs of votes. He did a lot of good things but I think he did a lot of things, too, that were not best for the country. He was the only man, for instance, that I know probably right then could have gotten that education bill through in the position he was in and advocating it. I don't think it would have passed if it hadn't been for him.

G: Do you know particular senators that he persuaded to vote for it that were not originally disposed to do so?

Thurmond -- I -- 20

T: I wouldn't attempt to name any right at the moment but there always was a group of senators that more or less would go with him on most everything. Then there were some, of course, that took a position more independent. As he told me, "I won't call on you unless I have to." And he wouldn't be after you all the time. It would be just when he was in a pinch. He knew that Senate so well, he knew what those senators were interested in--just like all of us nearly pretty well learn what each other is interested in--and he knew where to touch them. "I can get you this project here but I need some help on this piece of legislation. Won't you help me out?" He knew how to work them and did work them.

G: When you were on the Labor Committee, in the late fifties, did he try to get you to frustrate Jack Kennedy's legislation when it was clear that Jack Kennedy was going to run for president? Did you see a rivalry here between LBJ and Jack Kennedy.

T: I don't know that I saw it at that time. He ran in 1960.

G: But you had some labor bills coming up in 1958.

T: Yes, Jack Kennedy was working hard on those bills. I don't know that Lyndon had ever told me to stop them or anything like that. I don't recall that he did. But I don't know that he was doing anything to help Kennedy especially, because he was his rival for the nomination.

G: Well, Senator, I certainly do appreciate the time you've given us today.

T: Well, I've tried to be very frank with you and very accurate with you. As I say, I think Lyndon Johnson was a fellow with a lot of

Thurmond -- I -- 21

capacity. I did not admire the way he handled the Vietnam War. I think we should have won the Vietnam War. We could have won it without sending all those troops over there if he had just used the air force. I told him time and again that he was making a great mistake. We didn't win the war in Korea. That wasn't his fault, that was Truman's fault. We could have won that war. If we had, we wouldn't have had the war in Vietnam.

As long as we were in the Vietnam War though I had an idea that after he got re-elected he was going to go on and win it. But I think the State Department people and some of the softies in the country influenced him along the line that if he went on and bombed where he needed to to win that war, the port of Haiphong and Hanoi and places, and if necessary cut the dikes in the country, it might cause the Soviet Union to come in.

If you're in to win, you go in to win. If he had done those things he could have won the war. But I think he was influenced not to do them. We had all the military experts before us down here at that time, General [Curtis] LeMay and all the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and all the others. They gave us their opinion, or certainly most of them, and in their opinion the Soviets would not come in. I wondered why they didn't influence President Lyndon Johnson along that time. At any rate, we did not win that war and that was a terrible mistake.

G: Senator, as you look back, can you recall any other piece of

Thurmond -- I -- 22

legislation or political issue that is particularly vivid about Lyndon Johnson as majority leader?

T: Well, I remember when we had bills up involving labor unions. I was hoping that he would take a stand, stand up to the unions. But he did not, and I didn't like that stand he took. He was evidently getting ready to run for president and was more conciliatory toward the unions. I remember making speeches over there, telling what the unions were doing, the influence they were exerting and so forth. I was disappointed, too, that Dick Russell, and some of the other leaders who had been there a long time, didn't come in and make speeches when I made speeches. We might have stopped some of that legislation. But he didn't do it. Lyndon had to be president. It appeared that whatever was necessary to do, some of the senators were willing to acquiesce to the extent to help him accomplish that goal. Well, as I said, I voted for him for president because I thought he'd be a sounder man than Kennedy, but as it turned out this might not have been the case. Kennedy never could have gotten some legislation through the Congress, especially the Senate, that Lyndon did. By Lyndon having sat with these senators and worked with them and knowing them and knowing their weaknesses and what he'd have to do to win them over, he could get votes. Kennedy couldn't have done that. But Lyndon Johnson did. I think he was much smarter than Kennedy in that respect.

G: Well, I certainly do appreciate it, Senator.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Strom Thurmond

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Strom Thurmond of Washington, D.C. do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on May 7, 1979 in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

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

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

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

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

Strom Thurmond
Donor

17 June 1980
Date

James S. O'Heill
Acting Archivist of the United States
8/29/80
Date