INTERVIEWEE: George L-P Weaver
INTERVIEWER: Paige E. Mulhollan
DATE : January 6, 1969

M: Let's identify you for the purpose of the transcriber here. You're George L-P Weaver, currently Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs?

W: That is correct.

M: And you've been serving in this position since 1961. Is that correct?

W: Since July 1961.

M: You were an appointee, then, of President Kennedy and served through the entire Johnson administration.

W: Yes.

M: For many years you were associated with various labor organizations before you entered government service. Did you ever have occasion during those years to be in contact with Mr. Johnson while he was a Senator, for example?

W: Yes, I first met President Johnson in Stuart Symington's home in Missouri during the 1952 campaign. Mr. Symington was running for the Senate in his first election. [He] had a very stiff primary battle with the Attorney General of Missouri who had been endorsed by President Truman.

M: That's a pretty good endorsement in Missouri.

W: Yes. Although Senator Symington had been one of President Truman's favorites, he and Clark Clifford, both about the same age, very handsome, both tall blondes, had served in President Truman's administration and were very close to President Truman. However, President Truman had made his commitment before Symington entered the race. So it was a very hard fought and vigorous campaign.

At the time in question, Senator Johnson was in Missouri to speak on behalf of Mr. Symington's candidacy. And on Sundays during that campaign, a campaign which I'll never forget, we used to all assemble - all the members of Mr. Symington's campaign team - used to assemble at his home for breakfast on Sunday morning, to

review the past week's efforts and try to make plans for the coming week. I remember after this particular meeting, this tall, very striking Texan joined us and we were all introduced to Senator Johnson.

Then the second occasion was the last days of the general campaign - Mr. Symington won the primary. This second occasion was during the last ten days of the campaign, and if I remember correctly, it was the weekend before the election. Senator Johnson had been campaigning in the West, particularly for Senator McFarland, who was then the Majority Leader, and he seemed to be very pessimistic about the outcome of the election. I remember, we sat in Senator Symington's library, just the three of us - again after breakfast on a Sunday morning - and he was not only pessimistic but pretty accurately predicted the coming results of the election. He was very pessimistic about Governor Stevenson and Senator McFarland's chances of election. I remember Mr. Symington suggesting - they were discussing who the new Majority Leader should be if Senator McFarland was defeated - and Senator Symington suggested that he ought to aspire to and try for the leadership.

M: What did Johnson say?

W: He was very interested, and they then began discussing what support may be available among the Democratic senators. I'm not sure whether it was Senator Johnson or Mr. Symington who indicated that Senator Russell's support would be decisive. It was finally agreed that he ought to be one of the first among the senior members to be consulted, being one of the most astute and powerful men in the Senate. Other senators were talked about, as well as different groupings. At that time Senator Johnson was serving as the Senate whip. Of course, he did go on to win the post.

My next direct and personal contact with Senator Johnson was again through Senator Symington, and this would be in early 1954, probably February or March 1954. I received a telephone call from Senator Symington one day asking me to come up to lunch. He advised that he wanted to introduce me to someone I should know who wanted to talk to me. I agreed, and when I arrived at his office he took me to former Senator Earl Clement's office, who was then serving as Secretary of the Senate. We had lunch in his

office. Senator Symington excused himself immediately after lunch - lunch was just general conversation, very interesting and fascinating, but confined to general political conversation.

After Senator Symington left, Senator Clement rapidly proceeded to get down to business. He indicated he was aware of the kind of assistance I had been able to render to Senator Symington in Missouri, and that Senator Johnson was coming up for re-election that year, was very interested, particularly in the labor and Negro vote, what their reaction to him was, and could I assist him in sounding out their opinion toward him in Texas. I had a lot of friends in Texas. I had been active in Texas in the CIO side of the labor movement, allowing me to visit Texas a number of times. I had also been active with the NAACP in the State and knew most of their leaders. Therefore, I indicated that I would consult with my colleagues in the CIO and let him know. He said that if I decided to do it that he would arrange for me to meet with the Senator.

I consulted with my colleagues in the labor movement, particularly my chief, and he indicated that if I had the time and could do it, to go ahead. I thereupon met with Senator Johnson, and I recall that it was my first meeting alone with him for any length of time. It was around dusk, and I was fascinated with the manner in which he conducted the session. I was probably with him an hour or an hour-and-a-half, the telephone constantly ringing every five or seven minutes, with him talking and discussing different bills and other political matters with senators and their aids. During a couple of the telephone calls I stepped out of the room. But the long and short of it was that I left his office that evening, fascinated with the performance I had just witnessed, coming to the conclusion that the newspaper reports which were just beginning to emerge of his legislative skill were not over-rated and were not puffed up - and I had agreed to visit Texas for him and take a look at the situation in his State. I coordinated my efforts with his brother, who at that time was working in his office as his Administrative Assistant. I thereupon visited leaders across the State and came back and reported to him and his brother what I had sensed, and what the sentiment was, as I could read it.

M: What was that?

W: The sentiment was one of disillusionment and distrust, particularly among the Negro leadership. What I got roughly, if memory serves me correctly, was that Lyndon Johnson had been a great liberal, a friend of labor and Negroes, during his period as NYA Administrator as well as his early years as a Congressman. But after becoming a Senator, the Negro leadership had great difficulty in establishing meaningful contact with him. They felt that he had been captured by the conservatives in the State. There was however a note of realism in their attitude, recognizing the smallness of his majority in 1948, which forced him to curb his sails. I promised to convey this sentiment back to the Senator, and also promised that I would again meet with a State-wide representative group of leaders after I had reported to him.

I returned to Washington and talked first with his brother, then the Senator. I remember we had a long discussion, which I have often looked back upon, one of the clearest indications of the inner man, his drives, it was one of the most revealing conversations I've ever had with any leader of our country. I also remember this conversation because it continued well into the evening, it was dark when we finished - I guess I went up to his office around four - and it was good and dark when I left. He also gave me a pair of cufflinks and a tie clip with a hunting motif on this occasion which I still treasure very much.

But I remember him repeating to me several times - the burden of his conversation was that he had not changed - that he had learned that leadership was a question of what could be accomplished at any given time, that successful politics was the art of the possible at a given time, always continuing to push ahead; that the record of accomplishment for a leader was more important than rhetoric. He gave me a glimpse of his background, which is pretty well known now, and the drives that motivated his current strategy. I clearly remember him chiding me and other Negro leaders of that time of not recognizing our friends, that we were just as guilty of a form of discrimination for condemning men because of the section of the country they came from - and it was more surprising that it came from the people who were experiencing discrimination.

I remember we had quite a discussion about this point. He cited the blindness of the Negro and liberal leaders in denying high office - national office - to all Southerners. He cited Governor Byrnes' experience as an example during the 1944 Democratic convention - a combination of the labor movement and the Negro vote blindly refusing to support his ambitions to receive the nomination for Vice President. I remember countering that this was not the whole story, that the denial of support was based upon his record, as well as the fact that we went into the convention supporting Henry Wallace, and ended up supporting Senator Truman for the nomination based upon his record, and after his nomination worked hard for his election. There was a good deal of apprehension in the Negro community that the Negro and Liberal leadership had to overcome.

I remember our discussions so vividly, because as soon as the then-Senator Johnson, now President Johnson, was in a position of national leadership, he exhibited with great forthrightness and skill - and one must say with extreme courage - the sentiments that he expressed to me during that long conversation. I have one friend in Texas - I've done a good deal of campaigning in Texas in the last eight years - an undertaker called Swifty Davis in Longview, Texas. I have seen him quite often during my trips to Texas. I spoke before a group of his in this last campaign, and he always reminds me -

M: Maybe we'd better identify him formally. What's his first name?

W: Well, I don't remember. Swifty is all I know. He's a mortician in Longview - one of the Negro leaders in Longview and a very ardent Democrat. In fact, he led the group to open the only Humphrey headquarters in Longview during the 1968 campaign because the sentiment, as I gathered in the area, was for either Governor Wallace or Mr. Nixon.

M: That would be that part of Texas where that would be true, I'm sure.

W: Our friendship dates back to my campaigning in Texas for Senator Johnson. I finally got the group of Negro leaders together in Dallas on a Sunday afternoon, as I had promised, and reported to them my conversations with Senator Johnson. I advised them that he agreed that he had made mistakes, and he agreed to meet with

any of the group any time that he was in Texas or they were in Washington. And I must add, that he did - he made the first overtures from then on out, and began to meet with Negro and labor leaders all over the State on each trip back to Texas, and continues this practice until today.

But I remember going before this group on a hot Sunday afternoon in 1954, and arguing with them that I didn't know what mistakes had been made, but I thought that they would make a mistake if they denied their support to Senator Johnson's re-election. I remember the candidate running against Senator Johnson was a young man - a very wealthy oil heir - who didn't run much of a race. But I also remember that Senator Johnson didn't leave any stones unturned in that 1954 campaign. I remember also, that this group of leaders did support him.

And Swifty Davis still reminds me of this experience. There were one or two others who were present at these meetings; Hobart Taylor's father from Houston is one who was there. He has also reminded me of that campaign several times.

M: One of our people is interviewing Hobart Taylor this afternoon. We'll get all the coincidences in.

W: Hobart, Jr.

M: Yes.

W: This was his father. I have known his father since the very early 1940's. And I've always been pleased that my credibility in Texas has been rather high, particularly among the group of that age who were at the early meetings and remember that period very clearly, because the President's record has more than justified the prediction I made during those meetings.

I have seen him any number of times, of course, in the interim. We have always had a pleasant and friendly relationship. He has always been very kind to me. I remember also after that election, at a victory party that Max Kappelman gave for Hubert Humphrey - Hubert was also of the same Senate class - they both were originally elected to the Senate in 1948 and had to run for re-election in 1954. As I recall, Max Kappelman gave a victory party for Hubert right after Congress opened up in early 1955, and Senator Johnson

was present - the house was very crowded - and he came across the room with his wife to introduce his wife to me and to meet my wife. He was very fulsome in his praise to my wife about the help I had been in the election just concluded. Happily for me, that relationship was built upon, and one of the results is that I have campaigned in Texas every election since then.

M: Directly for Mr. Johnson?

W: For Mr. Johnson as well as others. One of the hottest and most vigorous campaigns was in 1966 when Waggoner Carr was running against Senator Tower. I generally stumped the State for the full Democratic ticket.

Previously in 1964, I campaigned for Senator Yarborough. I have a very warm letter which I will always treasure and value from Senator Yarborough. I've campaigned for the ticket all over the State, resulting in the development of some very warm friendships throughout the State. I have a great admiration for Governor Connally. I was subsequently invited to address the legislature in Texas last March.

M: I didn't know that.

W: I met the present governor, Governor Smith, who presided over the Senate session that day.

M: Had you gone back in the 1960's to Texas at the invitation of Mr. Johnson or from the Democratic party?

W: Both. I remember a meeting in the White House during a subsequent campaign period, and the President looked up and saw me in the meeting, and remarked, "What are you doing here? I thought you were in Texas." I told him, "Well, Mr. President, I have to come back every now and then; I've got a job up here too."

And I guess one of the happiest occasions that I remember was the experience that a group of us enjoyed in organizing a reception for the President just a few weeks ago - about three weeks ago - over at the Carlton Hotel. This was an effort on our part to express our appreciation and thanks for all that he has accomplished in the civil rights field. I was the Treasurer of this group. We made a presentation to the President.

I've been living in Washington since 1941 - which was my first national campaign. I have been in every national campaign except the 1956 campaign, as I was working in Asia at that time. To continue, I've seen five Presidents. And of the five Presidents, and all I've read about them, I'd say without any equivocation or doubt that President Johnson has done more in the field of human rights than any President in our history - and so much more than many of us who worked in this field dared dream could be accomplished in our lifetime. The youngsters coming along, unfortunately, don't share this memory - their active participation started in 1960 or 1961 or 1962 or maybe as far back as 1955 - therefore they cannot have the same appreciation for the leap forward that we have, who have been around a little longer.

M: I suppose his direct activity, in regard to civil rights, started with the 1957 Act. Did you have any conversations with him during the processing of this?

W: Yes, conversations of a decisive nature. If you remember, during that period there was considerable dissension within the civil rights groups and leadership. I was one of those who argued fervently and passionately within the group, that this bill represented a first step forward and we should take it, and not begrudgingly, but accept it as a first positive step and then build on it. I had several conversations with him during that period.

M: Did he express that same view that you mentioned - the necessity of taking the -

W: Yes. This was his overall approach and strategy as the Majority Leader, not only to this question but to many other questions. I think that the turning point in his legislative life, if one can judge from a distance, and I would say despite the several to me very meaningful conversations I had with him, and I would consider that I was one of those who worked with him and knew him from a distance - but looking at it from that perspective, I would conclude that this was an integral part of his strategy.

M: One step at a time.

W: And his philosophy. To him, it was the art of the possible at any given time. I got the impression that he thought that it was good politics as long as you were moving ahead. As one looks back now

with the great advantage of hindsight, I would say that this was a consistent philosophy of his, and one which he consistently operated from.

Now, as one looks back at these last five years of his record as President, one is forced to the conclusion that he was probably the most skilled tactician that we've ever had in the White House. Also, he had the one instinctual element in his makeup that is absolutely essential, I think, for great political leadership, that keen sense of timing which I think is instinctual rather than something only gained by experience. You can sharpen it, I believe, by experience and by exercising it, but I think most politicians who have this quality are born with it. I think he falls in this category, but his skill was acutely sharpened by experience. The way he seized upon the opportunities as they presented themselves, he saw them I think much quicker than even his most trusted lieutenants, because I've had many conversations with them that would indicate at the time that they didn't think he had a chance. I would cite the last and most recent Civil Rights Bill as an example. I've heard this story by several men who were present at the series of meetings - only he and Clarence Mitchell were ready to move ahead on the last Civil Rights Bill.

M: This is in 1968?

W: 1968 Bill on housing. But this again is an example of his sense of timing, that the time was right to move on such matters. Well, the same in the 1965 Voting Rights.

M: What about his position during those years as you got it on labor issues? That's a good deal less known than his civil rights position.

W: His views on labor issues were also based upon the sense of what was possible at a given time. But you have to distinguish, I think, between Lyndon Johnson as the Senator from Texas, and Lyndon Johnson as Vice President or President of the United States. Because as the Senator from Texas, the art of the possible was narrowed considerably. He also operated on the principle that one can only be a successful leader if one remains in office.

I learned this lesson well and was willing to fully accept this proposition after the defeats - the year that Senator Graham, Senator Pepper, were defeated in 1952, I think it was - 1952 - which was an unforgettable object lesson to me in politics - the inherent danger of getting out too far in front of your constituency. From a personal point of view, I can imagine great satisfaction is derived from one who stands on his principles even to the point of defeat, but for a working politician in public life, as I was at that time in the labor movement, continually faced with on-going situations, I couldn't afford the luxury of that kind of satisfaction because our constituency was constantly pushing for forward movement. Lyndon Johnson, I think, after his first defeat for the Senate and then a very close, hairbreadth race in 1948, was always keenly aware of the political realities in Texas.

So labor legislation took time, and he was highly criticized by many of my colleagues because of the slowness in which he moved. But here again the true measure, I think, of the man's principles, as well as direction in which he ultimately would like to go, was the difference when he was free of the regional restrictions that being the Senator from Texas placed on him. He truly became a national leader. So now you find that the labor movement looks upon him with the same degree of affection and respect and gratitude in which they looked upon FDR or in which they looked upon President Truman. Now this is a distinction which a lot of my Liberal friends don't seem to make.

M: The crisis in having to make that distinction came, of course, with his nomination with Kennedy on the ticket in 1960. And some of, particularly, the white Liberals didn't want to go along -

W: Not only the white Liberals but many others, but I must confess that I also felt very bruised.

M: Even with your -

W: Yes, because I was an early supporter of Senator Symington. I happened to be one of the original group that Senator Symington gathered around him. In fact, I was a member of the small group that originally persuaded him to throw his hat in the ring. I am proud to enjoy a very warm and valuable friendship with Senator Symington that has been strengthened and enhanced over the years. If you'll remember, he was in the race for the Presidency two months before he announced - long before Senator Johnson became a known candidate.

I was approached by, first, friends of Senator Johnson and then by him. I ran into him one day in the hall in the Senate and we began to discuss the coming Democratic convention which was to shortly open. I advised him that I was supporting Senator Symington, and he understood it clearly, because he understands one of the important requisites of politics is loyalty to your commitment.

If you also remember - during the convention the Symington forces thought that after President Kennedy was nominated Senator Symington was going to be chosen as the next Vice President. In fact, we were very convinced of it. We were very shocked therefore when word came down that Senator Johnson was chosen by President Kennedy. I was one of those who had put in a lot of months of hard work, with all the enthusiasm and all one's inner being that is put into one of these campaigns, particularly when you're close to the candidate.

But the convention, if I remember correctly, was in July or the first of August. Immediately thereafter I took a short vacation and then threw myself wholeheartedly in the campaign. At that time I was Director of Political Education for my union, so I was therefore right in the middle of the campaign right up to the election.

In retrospect, I think some of President Johnson's finest moments under conflict were during that campaign.

M: In what way? You mean, with the various groups that opposed him?

W: The various groups that opposed him, the manner in which he handled himself, considering all of the passion and the turbulence that existed in many sections of the South, including his own State and the city of Dallas. I happened to be in Dallas the day of the nasty spitting incident. I wasn't present at the hotel. I tried to get hold of him, however, but couldn't, to express my feeling of revulsion and disgust and admiration for the way that he and Mrs. Johnson handled themselves.

I have also developed a very great admiration for Mrs. Johnson. I think that history will clearly indicate the great contributions she has made, not only to the President, but to her country.

M: That has been one of the most universal comments that we've gotten. This seems to be a unanimous view.

W: I think that the way she has consistently handled herself under the most difficult of circumstances - following Mrs. Kennedy, and the rather foolish expectations of some people - the dignity and the grace in which she handled that difficult period - the way that she has served the country has underscored much more vividly than at any time since Mrs. Roosevelt that our country quite often gets two-for-one in the White House. I think that she is deserving of great credit.

M: I think Mrs. Roosevelt is one of those who was disappointed with the second man on the ticket in 1960.

W: She was.

M: Did you go ahead and campaign for the ticket?

W: Yes. Icampaigned and worked from August right on up until the election. I had lunch with Mrs. Roosevelt and Jim Cary during the campaign, and she was I think much more - at least this is the impression that I drew from that luncheon - I'm trying to recall it from memory - I got the impression that she was much more apprehensive about Senator Kennedy than she was about Senator Johnson.

M: For what reason, or did she give -?

W: If you'll remember, she opposed Senator Kennedy from the outset. She was for Adlai Stevenson. She was fearful of the influence of his father; she was fearful of the influence of the Church. And you'll remember also she was still smarting from her experience with Cardinal Spellman. I think this experience was still sharp in her mind, still fresh in her mind.

But of course President Kennedy, as well as President Johnson, were very wise and graceful towards their former opponents. I clearly remember during the formation of the new government that there was no distinction made between those who had supported Senator Symington or Adlai Stevenson or any of the other candidates or would-be candidates, there was no attempt to play favorites with those who were for Senator Kennedy before the convention. Therefore, I think this was one of the prime factors in establishing such a high morale, verve and vigor during the Kennedy administration.

M: That's certainly the case in your case. You were an active supporter of Senator Symington and came right in almost as soon as the -

W: I was invited to serve the administration on December 12 by Arthur Goldberg. I came in with him, and I've been here ever since.

M: Do you think Mr. Johnson had anything at all to do with your selection to serve the administration?

W: No, I don't. But I was in contact with him all during the inaugural period and worked with him, and met with him several times when he was Vice President. He pulled together a small group of old friends who had experience in the civil rights and human rights field - you'll remember, he immediately became chairman of the Contract Compliance Committee - and organized this small group of old friends and met with them fairly frequently and counseled with them in regard to programs that should be followed by that Committee. I met with that group several times at his request, although it was outside the immediate scope of my official responsibilities.

M: What about the comparison? You're in rather a unique position to be able to have seen the Labor Department as it progressed under the Kennedy administration and all through the Johnson administration. Are there important differences in policy regarding the Labor Department?

W: There are important results, and it's most difficult to make meaningful comparisons - I think I would describe it in that manner. There were programs and a tone and attitude established during the Kennedy administration that was implemented and pushed ahead rapidly under the Johnson administration, particularly, the flow of legislation that gave statutory meaning to these programs.

I think that one of the great contributions that history will record for the Johnson administration was the development in the human rights and the civil rights areas, of forthrightly meeting this problem, and seeking to rectify by legislation as rapidly as possible. In that evolutionary process the country began to recognize that equality of opportunity was a myth in view of the many years of discrimination, and that equality of opportunity was only a reality at birth. Immediately after birth inequalities begin to grow, slowly develop, and then openly manifest themselves.

This problem was brought into clearer focus for the country by the President in his Howard University and University of Michigan speeches, which first began to focus the eyes and attention of the country on this gap between our ideals and day-to-day practices. Then the minds and energy of our government and people were focused on the pockets of poverty within the affluence in our country. This was, I think, one of his great contributions. I think it will eventually be recognized by historians as an integral part of the civil rights struggle of this period.

M: They're part of the same thing.

W: It also began to open the eyes of the country to the fact that the blacks are a minority in our country of those suffering from poverty. It broadens the goal to where it should be - the elimination of degrading poverty. There's no justification for a system as effective and rich as our's to have these contrasts - these pockets of poverty. With this, however, this man and his administration, has had the character of a kind of Greek tragedy - nothing that could have happened to it hasn't happened.

M: That's all-encompassing.

W: Yes, if you reflect for a moment, the success in terms of legislation, the success in terms of implementing legislation, in terms of setting the moral tone in our country. Here is a man who was looked upon as a wheeler-dealer, but this has been a very clean administration. We haven't had any scandals. We haven't had a serious scandal in the five years he was President. The confidence he has reposed in the key people he has appointed has been justified. Then on the other hand, we've had the Viet-Nam situation which detracted from these needed domestic programs, which focused attention and minds and energies away from this positive side. However, I've had a recent preoccupation, sensed in the latter days of the campaign, as well as since the campaign, that many people are now beginning to look back with a sense of remorse, regret and at the positive aspects of this record.

M: Does that mean that because of the results of the campaign -?

W: That may be. That may be part of it, too. But I always remember that night - that March 31st speech, as I sat with my wife and was as shocked as I guess the rest of the country was. It was one of

the best kept secrets in this man's town. This was the supreme sacrifice for the President. I guess the historians will be looking at this period and drawing from it many reasons, as well as the playwrights.

M: It could be both, a history and a drama.

W: That's right. Yes, in years to come because it has all of the elements of drama - it has the kind of elements that one would almost laugh off a stage if a dramatist tried to put it on the stage before it really happened.

M: If it were fiction instead of fact.

W: That's right. If it hadn't happened.

M: What about the comparison of appointment policy of minorities - not just Negroes, but women for example? Did Mr. Johnson change significantly from the Kennedy administration in either appointing more minority members, or fewer?

W: He appointed many more, both Negroes and women, to high and significant policy posts, starting of course with the Supreme Court, the Cabinet, Solicitor General, the Federal Reserve Board, many Assistant Secretaries and Ambassadors. In addition, he has constantly been needling his administration for more. He was constantly pushing the Cabinet in terms of increasing their percentages, and he quickly began to focus on the quality of the appointments as well as the numbers. No, I don't think that there is really much of a comparison, not much of a comparison at all.

I must also quickly say that many of these policies, <u>many</u> of these policies were first articulated by President Kennedy, but the legislative implementation was accomplished by President Johnson. You see, the Kennedy administration, until after the "March on Washington", did not think it feasible to seek legislative implementation. But the trend was reversed during the Johnson administration. The legislation passed has been hard to keep up with.

In the same way it's difficult to keep up with the appointments. I remember the time when I would know all the Negroes in government serving in positions of importance. I don't now. I don't even

attempt to try to keep up with them. You can't. I'm constantly surprised in reading, particularly of some youngster who is in a very key and strategic policy position whom I haven't met or heard of before.

M: You have been in a position of that kind for a long time. Have you been, in addition, outside the normal course of your job, at any point a link or contact between Mr. Johnson and the leaders of the various civil rights organizations?

W: No, I haven't. You see, my work and my responsibility have been largely international. I learned a long time ago that the best way to keep people out of your hair is to stay out of their's. But I have maintained contact, particularly in the political arena. I have made many political tours and therefore have been able to maintain considerable contact. In addition, I worked in the civil rights area for many years, in the labor movement and the community. Therefore, I know many of the leaders, particularly the leaders of my generation or those of the following generation.

M: That's what I was really driving toward there. I think you mentioned a couple of times earlier the generation difference here within the civil rights movement. Is it possible to find out what Mr. Johnson's ties have been and relations have been, particularly with the newer generation?

W: I think that the major link and the person who has bridged this gap, if there is one, has been Louis Martin on the Democratic National Committee. He has been the major link. Then, of course, some of the younger appointees, and Ed Sylvester comes to mind immediately, whom President Johnson appointed as Assistant Secretary of HEW, and who was a colleague of mine here in the Labor Department. And a lot of the younger men of that age group who are in positions of influence - Andy Brimmer, people like him, who are in their thirties and early forties, and who are in important policy positions. But I would repeat, that the most important link has been Louis Martin - and Cliff Alexander, who has worked with him, have been important links with this group.

M: When Mr. Johnson became President suddenly in late 1963, did he ever soon after that get directly in touch with you and give you an idea that he wanted you to stay on, or what he wanted you to do?

W: He asked everyone to stay on.

M: Yes, the blanket -

W: He asked everyone to stay on. My first direct contact with him was shortly after his becoming President to arrange for Dave Morse, who is Director-General of the ILO, to see him. Then I was in several meetings in the White House shortly afterwards. There was never any indication that he did not mean this sincerely. I would say there was no exceptional or overt action on his part or on mine. I just assumed that he wanted us to stay - all the evidence pointed in that direction - that this was a very honest request - and we just continued to function as we had.

M: Was that a wise decision? There's always the question, did the Kennedy people serve loyally after staying on? Do you have any impression about that at all?

W: Yes, my impression is that they did. Those who were close to President Kennedy on the White House level soon either moved into other positions to give the President the freedom to appoint his own people without embarrassment, to develop his own personal staff. But those whom I came in contact with in the international community, where I spent an overwhelming percentage of my time, served him equally as loyally as they had President Kennedy.

Now there was, of course, immediate comment on the difference in style, but this soon faded away to a murmur. I think it faded away for two fundamental reasons. First, the great strength and skill of President Johnson during that most difficult transitional period, when the country could have blown up, earned the greatest degree of admiration, no matter how you felt personally or how you were attracted to this nebulous element of style.

The second, was the immediate tremendous legislative record - this record of practical accomplishment. Just remember those first months after President Kennedy's assassination. Between that period in November and when we met in convention in Atlantic City in July, there was a legislative record made unlike any that

we had experienced since back in the first New Deal days. So the combination of the two, I think, did more to get the country over this difficult period - it projected the minds of the people to great goals. It kept you so damned busy just keeping up with the momentum and the initiatives that the President was inventing, pushing and cajoling through Congress.

M: You didn't have time to worry about style.

W: Yes, that's right. This question of style became just a point of conversation in Georgetown salons - and then he began to, my God - the kind of load he took on of seeing people. He has probably seen more people in the White House than any President we've had in many, many years. People of all kinds!

M: One of the persistent stories is of Mr. Johnson picking up the telephone and calling assistant secretary level people and lower level people. Did that happen in those days to you, for example? Direct contact with you, or did he usually deal through channels, through the Secretary or -?

W: Generally through the Secretary. I heard these stories, but I never talked to anybody whom he called directly. It was always somebody else. I think there was a good deal of fiction and myth about these stories - other than the people whom he had dealt with over the years. I think there were more calls to people outside of Government, because this is another aspect of his style which differed from previous Presidents, he drew probably as heavily on people outside of Government, on their advice on substantive questions of policy, than he did with people in Government.

M: We've talked quite awhile here without mentioning your present job which, of course, you've been in now for most of the full eight years of the Democratic administrations. What have been the major issues and challenges of your position since Mr. Johnson has been President, in your opinion?

W: My major preoccupations have fallen into two categories. One has been my responsibilities as United States Government representative in the ILO. This year I'm serving as Chariman of the Governing Body, which means I've agreed to stay on with the incoming administration until my term runs out in June, because this is

a personal election. The first qualification is being a Government representative, but then you're elected more or less in your personal capacity, because the ILO is a tripartite organization including employers and workers, and you have to have the confidence of all three groups to be elected.

The other major activity is in the area of trade and tariff. Among the important departures of the 1962 amendment to the trade bill - it's called the Trade Expansion Act - were three rather fundamental provisions of the Act, differing from the old Hull Reciprocal Trade Act, which our basic trade policy has been grounded on since the mid '30's. The first was that Congress gave the President the authority to cut tariffs up to fifty percent without coming back to Congress for approval. As a result, if some tariffs of the Common Market had gone into effect with England joining the Common Market, we would have been able in some areas to cut tariffs one hundred percent.

The second major departure was that Congress established in the President's office a special trade representative for the President, which recognized that trade and tariff policy is of such fundamental interest to the domestic agencies that it should be in the President's office rather than in the State Department. This is particularly true of Commerce and Labor - to a lesser extent, Interior, Agriculture, and Defense. It established a Cabinet committee to advise the special trade representative. Under that is an executive committee, which I served on as alternate to the Secretary, and an interagency mechanism was created to coordinate administration policy. But most important to our Department, the Act requires the Secretary of Labor to advise the President on the employment impact of any major trade action, invocation of an escape clause, or removal of an escape clause. This required the Department of Labor to develop a capacity to implement the Secretary's responsibility under the Act. I became deeply involved as this responsibility was allocated to the Bureau of International Affairs.

The third departure was that it created the concept of adjustment assistance, which recognizes that expanded trade benefits all of American industry, and as a result if any section in industry is hurt by lower tariffs that contributes to trade expansion, there should be assistance given to the workers and to the employer who are so affected. The Trade Expansion Act also requires the Secretary of Commerce to advise the President of the impact on industry of any trade action.

The fourth, I would say, rather fundamental departure, was the development of this interagency machinery that resulted in these hertofore so-called domestic agencies becoming an integral part of the trade and tariff government machinery.

M: Did it work?

W: Yes, it has worked, I think, exceptionally well. For example, although an Assistant Secretary of Labor, I was one of the senior members of the negotiating team in the Kennedy Round. During the final period of the negotiations I was responsible for the team that conducted the bilateral negotiations with Japan, one of our major trading partners.

So these are the two areas where I spent most of my time. The ILO brings into focus not only labor and social problems, but international political problems as well. The ILO, like all the UN specialized agencies, immediately feels the repercussions and reverberations of the political issues that demand solution in the UN, as they impact throughout the system. For example, the confrontation on South Africa originated in the ILO in 1963. South Africa withdrew, as a result, from the ILO. The debate was much more vigorous, and the condemnation was much more shrill and sharp in the ILO than it was in the UN. So these have been my two major responsibilities. We have other programs in the Bureau, but I would say that I probably spent more time on these two than on the other programs.

M: Has Mr. Johnson ever indicated any direct interest, for example, in the ILO?

W: Yes. He has met with the Director-General. He has demonstrated an awareness of the ILO dating from his days in the Senate. I do not know whether he has detailed knowledge, although I would not

expect him to have detailed knowledge of the Organisation. But he has expressed an awareness of the ILO, and he has known of some of the problems which we have faced which have reached his desk, particularly some of the political issues.

M: You'd be in a good position to know, one of the things that the critics of the Viet-Nam policy have frequently charged is that the policy in Southeast Asia has had adverse fallout effects in other areas. Has this been true in the ILO?

W: It has. I've had to carry the burden of the debate in the ILO every year, and the Unites States representatives in the other specialized agencies have had the same experience. I've had to defend our policy every year in the annual conference of the ILO. The ILO is organized like the United Nations. The United Nations has a General Assembly that meets once a year for three months. We have an annual conference that meets, thank God, for only three weeks! They have a Security Council; we have a Governing Body. Their Security Council meets once a month; our Governing Body meets four times a year. That's the body that I was elected chairman of. Our chairmen are elected for a year, and their's rotate every month. The Security Council has fifteen members, five are permanent. The ILO has forty-eight members: twenty-four governments, twelve employers, twelve workers. The ILO has ten states of chief industrial importance out of the twenty-four. They have all the characteristics of the permanent members of the Security Council, except that we do not have the veto in the ILO. The permanent members of the Security Council are the countries that are fixed and designated by name in the constitution. The ten states of chief industrial importance are fixed in the constitution, but the individual countries are determined by a statistical formula which includes income, number of people, gross national product, and other statistical factors. It can shift and change as the countries grow and as they change. The ten states of industrial importance in the ILO do not have the veto power.

But we have the same kind of fallout - by that I mean, the major political issues which seize the UN in their meetings have a fallout in all the specialized agencies. For example, in 1967,

the war in the Middle East was going on while we were in conference, and we felt the impact each day. In 1968 we were in our annual conference when Senator Kennedy was assassinated, and we immediately felt the repercussions. It was quite an eye-opener to me, I realized in a fundamental, sharply emotional way, how small our world is. For example, I watched the funeral of Senator Kennedy with several of my colleagues from different parts of the world and was fascinated to observe their reactions. We were sharing this sorrowful experience in Geneva, Switzerland, at the same time the American people were.

In fact, I had two experiences during that tradegy which brought home to me how small our world is and what impact the revolution in communication and transportation has had on everyday life. I was awakened by one of the Marine guards at the Embassy the morning that Senator Kennedy was shot.

M: You were in what country?

W: I was in Geneva. There's a six-hour time difference. He woke me about six or six-fifteen in the morning. I immediately put my clothes on and went down to the Embassy and began to watch the ticker. I have a staff meeting every morning at eight-thirty during the conference. By the time my colleagues arrived at the Embassy for the staff meeting, I had the advantage of two or three hours at the ticker tape. When we arrived at the plenary session at ten, of course, the news was all over the conference. Now remember, ten o'clock in Geneva is four o'clock in the morning in the United States. And so we were way ahead of the average American in terms of the developments. And at about three-thirty, which was nine-thirty here, I called the Secretary and talked to him and his executive assistant. I was seeking policy guidance. But I realized that they were repeating to me information that I had read early in the morning from the same ticker tape that they had read. So this experience just brought home to me with a shock just how small this world is.

I noticed something else along these lines when I was in Viet-Nam this September. I visited the Mekong valley. I noticed the farmers sloshing through the rice paddies, several of them

with transistor radios around their necks. They were not only listening to music while they were working, they were also getting news. So this question of news and the impact of it has instantaneous reaction throughout the world.

M: What about on the tariff negotiations - the other half of your measure of concern? Has the President been personally interested in -?

W: Personally interested and personally involved - because most of these tariff actions had to reach his desk for decision. Most of the meetings I had in the White House were on tariff questions. They're normally handled by Harry McPherson and DeVier Pearson, and most of them end up over at the White House, particularly when there is a disagreement between agencies.

M: I was going to ask about that. The interagency aspect that you mentioned earlier is of course a very complicated and important question.

W: It's complicated and important, and we found that the majority of cases were settled through the interagency machinery. But I would say probably maybe three to four percent of them reached the White House level for decision.

M: Is that by staff or directly to the President, you mean the three or four percent?

W: They're directly by the President - decisions by the President. The conflicting views are generally transmitted by one of the President's aides, but the decision is by the President. And this is understandable because different agencies look at these questions through different eyeglasses, according to their major responsibilities and according to their missions. The State Department, for example, looks at it from the foreign policy angle - what the impact is on many other aspects of foreign policy problems in question with a different country or a given group of countries; whereas the Labor Department looks at it in terms of jobs - from the domestic impact - what impact it has on jobs in this country, or what specific impact it will have on communities. Commerce looks at it from a similar point of view. A dispute between agencies has to be resolved - if it can't be resolved in the interagency structure, then it has to be resolved by the President.

M: When it does go up like that, has it been your experience in Mr. Johnson's time that all of the departments get equal hearing and access?

W: The interagency machinery is geared to provide a full hearing by all contending interests, both private and public. The different issues are distilled and placed before the President with the alternatives and options, as most questions reaching him are. And very few of them when they reach that level are clearly black or white, they're always indistinct shades of gray.

M: If they were black or white, they wouldn't get that far.

W: That's right. There is no need to get that far. It's always the tough ones, the tight ones, that reach him.

M: But there's no question of one department having more successful procedures to get its case to the top than another?

W: No, because the machinery has proven workable - however, if a department feels strong enough about a case and is willing to invoke the machinery that has been provided and doesn't do its homework properly, the first inclination is to feel that you've been had - the department feels that it has been had. But when you pause and reflect and are objective about it, you conclude that it's because you haven't done your homework properly - or you've done an inadequate job of presentation.

M: Some other guy has done a better job.

W: That's right. Somebody has done their homework better, yes.

M: What about issues that come up involving labor and foreign affairs in a sort of a peripheral way? One of them I think of right offhand is when Mr. Johnson first became President, there was the issue of wheat sales to the Soviet Union, the international longshoremen. Does that fall into your purview?

W: It comes up eventually to this desk, yes. It comes to me, from here to the Secretary, and from the Secretary to the President. We have to staff it out in terms - we attempt to staff it out in terms of the impact on employment - you see, our mission is clearly spelled out in the statute, it deals with the impact on jobs. This is our main point of reference. Then a question also has to be weighed and measured in terms of the many other factors of

foreign policy as we see them from our vantage point, and as we are able to discuss them and to weigh the impact domestically, as well as the impact upon Congress - all of these factors have to be taken into consideration by this office and the Secretary before a recommendation is made to the President.

M: Are you the people that the President then sends out, say, to deal with the longshoremen?

W: The Department of Labor is, but it would not be my responsibility. That would fall within the purview of the Labor Management Relations Bureau, who have the direct daily continual contact with this industry. In very important cases, it has generally been the Secretary or the Under Secretary who have handled these matters. Wirtz or Reynolds have been the ones who carry them out. Occasionally, I've gotten in touch with an individual, and they generally start with me. One of our important responsibilities is to feed into the international community, or the foreign policy machinery of the Government, the labor factor as well as the labor impact on foreign policy.

And it's considerable, particularly in the newly emerging countries, so many of the leaders are former trade unionists, or their major political support is from labor; most of them have come to power by the labor route. We know them fairly well in our Bureau. Some we've known before I became a Government official. And quite often our credential is a little better with them than our diplomats in their country. We regularly see them at the ILO meetings, and a continual dialogue is in progress. It's our responsibility to feed this factor into the foreign policy making machinery of our Government. So consequently, I spend as much time in the State Department as I spend here.

M: The State Department sometimes has a reputation for not cooperating very well with other agencies. Have you been able to work with this State Department?

W: Most of the time. We've had our problems, but they have not been insurmountable. The State Department is like any other agency. If your case is well prepared and your logic is defensible, you generally can secure a fair hearing - also, one learns in a

bureaucracy which buttons to touch. Or, if you have to go around, you learn which way to go. I don't find the State Department any more intransigent, any more difficult than any other department. We have a grave problem now with the Defense Department, and at present I'm finding the Defense Department more intransigent than State. This will vary from time to time.

M: You have a labor attache in every Embassy?

W: No, they're not in every Embassy. There are about sixty or seventy labor attaches, and we have about a hundred and fourteen or fifteen Embassies.

This is an interesting problem also, for responsibility here is to recruit and train labor attaches, and then they become State Department officers. They're then State Department people.

Now I serve on the Foreign Service Board. We serve on the panels that rate the officers for promotion or selection out. Our advice is sought on assignments and reassignments of labor attaches. We have a training program here in the Department for middle-level Foreign Service officers who want to go into the labor field. It's a year's training program. We work constantly on a daily basis with the State Department in the labor area. But these labor attaches are Foreign Service officers. They're on the State Department payroll.

M: So getting their story heard at the Chief of Mission level is within the State Department and doesn't concern the Labor Department?

W: Yes, it does, and sometimes it's done directly through the State Department. Most Ambassadors who have labor attaches, visit us when they're on home leave, they come over to see us, or I go over to see them. When they're appointed, they generally visit us, particularly if labor is a factor in their country of assignment. Then I always visit with them when I'm in the field. It's an interesting and constructive relationship that has evolved over the years.

M: It is based on, the way you describe it, as much a personal level as it is on institutional -?

W: It is institutionalized, but however well it works of course is in direct relation to the personalities. It's on an institutional

basis. I serve on the Board of Foreign Service by statute of the Wriston Act of 1946. Then flowing from my service on the Board are Labor Department alternates in the different levels - of assignment, of promotion, and so forth - in the Department, in addition to serving on any number of task forces in the Department.

But you see, today the successful management of our foreign policy requires the utilization of the total resources of our Government, domestic as well as international. Let me give you a couple of illustrations. Well, I think the most vivid illustration of this is our aid program. When we started the Alliance for Progress, two of the fundamental elements in that program were the need for and encouragement of land reform and tax reform. When the Latin American countries began to move in the area of tax reform and they asked for technical assistance, we had to turn to the Bureau of Internal Revenue and ask them to provide technicians to help the Latin American governments.

M: That's a long way from aid.

W: That's right. It's the same way in manpower. When they need manpower experts, they turn to us. We have developed a Department of Labor International Technical Assistance Corps. We have about thirty to thirty-five professionals in the various manpower disciplines - the Employment Service, Statistics, Labor Inspection, Labor Administration and across-the-board services that we make available to the AID administration, and they use these experts as long as needed in technical assistance projects in the AID program. Then when they're not on assignment abroad, they come back to us in the Department, and go back into their discipline. However, they don't have much time in their discipline because they're generally on demand for assignment abroad.

But this is an example, and this is what has caused this interagency machinery to develop in our Government. And it's more efficient, more effective, because if the AID administration attempted to develop their own manpower experts, it would be a duplication. It would be a wasteful, costly duplication, and they wouldn't get the best technicians.

M: Probably not, they're here.

W: That's right. The same way in Agriculture. So it has become a necessity - I was looking at the time, as. I've got another date, part of the transitional exercise we're going through.

M: I expect you're going through plenty of that. Just one specific question that I want to be sure and get your thoughts on, and this is in regard to immigration - Mr. Johnson's immigration program.

W: This has given us added responsibilities because the immigration program eliminated an indefensible discriminatory pattern of immigration in America.

M: According to origin, you mean.

W: Yes. This pattern had been fixed by statute for many years. The present results have been a much fairer system of immigration. The Department of Labor has an important responsibility under the Act. We have to certify that there are no American workers available. If there are no American workers available, then we have to set a rate of wages that will not adversely affect the American wage rates in a given industry. Therefore, we have been involved in the administration of the Act in two ways.

Probably, the most dramatic illustration of our involvement in this problem was our efforts in the Bracero program. There was grave apprehension in State and in other quarters of the Government that the changes we were contemplating would cause terrific political problems with Mexico, but they didn't. Now, part of the reason was we approached this problem very carefully through our labor attache in the Embassy in Mexico, and then I made a trip to Mexico. I was in Mexico for textile negotiations, but also took the opportunity to discuss our ideas for change with the labor leaders - many of whom I knew before I came on this job - and clearly spelled out what we were trying to do. Though it meant less jobs, it did raise the level of pay for those who would have jobs and eliminated an indefensible sore that had plagued our relationships for years.

M: Was President Johnson ever interested in that Bracero issue to your knowledge? Did he ever play any part in the Congressional fight, for example, that -?

W: No, I don't know of any. It was fully carried out by the Secretary.

The Secretary carried this issue alone. At times I thought there was some opposition over at the White House, because while it caused terrific domestic political pressure in Congress, the Secretary persisted and successfully carried it out.

M: The White House obstructed in some way?

W: I don't know of them actually obstructing, but I would say that there were times when I had the distinct impression that the Secretary was carrying the load pretty much alone - this was a Department of Labor initiative without White House leadership.

M: Do what you can, but do it alone.

W: That's right.

M: The only other thing I wanted to bring up is really not a question at all, but something to give you a chance to say anything that we haven't talked about. Are there any insights you have, or any experiences you have had, regarding the President that we haven't mentioned in our conversation thus far and which you think are important; and if so, be sure to add them here before I get away.

W: No, I can't think of any. I can think of one area of criticism. I think if the President had it to do over again that he would devote more time and energy to the political machinery of the party.

M: You mean the party machinery?

W: Yes. You see, the President's several roles of being the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States and head of the party - I think the party didn't get the attention and effort from the President that these other two areas did.

M: This becomes evident in the campaign this year?

W: It was evident not only in the campaign, but the weakness was obvious in the party in many places that I visited before the election. Of course, it evidenced itself more dramatically in the election.

M: This is a strange oversight for a man that's as much of a politician -

W: That's right.

M: Do you know of any reason to explain this?

W: No, I don't know of any. It's not an area I've had any change to talk to him or anyone close to him about. This is an opinion that has grown upon reflection, particularly resulting from the experiences of this year's campaign.

M: You've been most cooperative, and I certainly want to thank you, and the project thanks you.

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By George L-P Weaver

to the

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