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INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT C. WOOD

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. MC COMB

October 19, 1968

W: I was born of southern parents in St. Louis, where they were residing at that time, briefly in 1923. We returned to the South. My mother and father were Tennesseean and Alabaman people with a long branch in Florida. Portions of my family began in Florida in 1840. And so I come out of Jacksonville, Florida, where I moved as a baby and went through the schools in what my mother called in those days "an era of savage gentility." My dad was a traveling salesman, my mother was a school teacher. When we got ready for me to go to college, it was the end of the depression and my two brothers had gone to the University of Florida, but we were out of money and I was lucky to get a scholarship at Princeton. I went to Princeton for two-and-a-half years, left for World War II, was in the war for three years in the 76th Infantry (ETO). I returned to Princeton--

M: I might add you won a Bronze Star.

W: Yes. I returned to Princeton, applied for the foreign service, got accepted, but then I found out they were going to send me abroad for three years again immediately. That was at Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, or somewhere like that. That was a fate that I wasn't ready to accept so I went to the Harvard Littauer School instead. I graduated from there in 1950; in effect, 1949. I left still completing my dissertation, and I returned as Assistant State Auditor to the State of Florida.

M: Let me interrupt you here a minute. You got a string of degrees; you got an A.B. from Princeton--

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W: A.B. from Princeton.

M: What was that in?

W: That was in the School of International Affairs, Public Affairs, the Woodrow Wilson School. And then a Master of Public Administration, which at that time at Harvard was a sort of certificate of good attendance for a year. It's kind of like the Harvard master is in history. You attend classes and stay there but no thesis. Then a Master of Arts came along in the next year and then the Ph.D. in 1950.

M: And your Ph.D. was in Political Science?

W: In Political Economy. It's called the so-called joint degree, Political Economy and Government. You take about 50-50 work in Economics and Government. I became essentially a Political Scientist afterwards. I know enough economics to keep my colleagues in the Budget Bureau honest.

But then I went back to Florida as Assistant State Auditor for awhile, ended up in Titusville auditing the sheriff's accounts there, and completed my dissertation in that little town. And then I became Associate Director by prearrangement of the Florida Legislative Reference Bureau. I had a couple of years there.

There was a link that's interesting in this Administration. One of the leading Senators of that time was Leroy Collins whom I worked for initially; and then Ferris Bryant, who was then a promising young member of the House; Alan Boyd, who had just come to Tallahassee in some administrative activity; and we all overlapped in Tallahassee in those couple of years. In 1966, of course, Boyd and Collins and I were to be simultaneously under secretaries in the Johnson Administration, and Ferris Bryant at that rank is head of the Office of Emergency Management. So we found ourselves back in Washington, both in this casual relationship and

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in different ways--in our initial efforts in the Department of Commerce and the development of relationships between DOT and HUD and in the President's efforts to get out into all the state governments to present our program which you'll remember occurred in 1967. These relationships smoothed the path a great deal, and it was an accident--I've reflected on it considerably.

I stayed there and found in effect that Tallahassee of that era after Cambridge was somewhat enervating, particularly if one is a bachelor. I came to rejoin in a sense my class at Littauer in the Bureau of the Budget. My class had mostly gone to Washington. I worked for three years in the Budget Bureau through the transition, Truman to Eisenhower.

M: That was about 1951 to 1954?

W: That's 1951 to 1954. I got my early introduction to the housing field in that time, and I worked on Housing and Civil Defense organizational matters. I returned on an invitation to Harvard for a lectureship for one year which turned into a four-year appointment. Prior to that running out, M.I.T. started in Political Science seriously. We joined that faculty and for the last ten years I have been with that faculty, going up through the ranks and then being head the last couple of years.

M: This was 1957 to 1966?

W: 1957 to 1966. When the President appointed me, Herb Kaufmann, my co-chairman from Yale, wrote and said, "I've thought of many ways to get out of being chairman of the Political Science Department, including suicide, but I never thought of anything that drastic." But in effect that's the period when M.I.T. came of age in Political Science as it had done in Economics the decade before with Paul Samuelson. History always kept almost coming but then the key figure, first John Blum and then Al Chandler, going away elsewhere, so history has never quite taken off at the Institute.

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M: Incidentally, while at M.I.T., were you associated with that Joint Center for Urban Studies?

W: Yes, I was a member of the Faculty Advisory Committee and a participant in the Joint Center. Martin Meyerson and Lloyd Rodwin were the two senior people at that time. But Charlie Haar and I got increasingly involved in it. It was in 1959 that practiced politics--other than just the avocation strand--began to emerge when I backed one of the candidates for mayor, John Powers not John Collins, who has since joined us on the M.I.T. faculty. It was the beginning of the recognition of the rise of the academics as political figures that could have a function there, (which I've set down in the Alabama lectures of 1965, and which I've never gotten published) but which if the library wants, it can have. It was my last effort to think out these new critical points in decision-making. Following that, the Kennedy brain trust emerged and those details, I think I have set down on record for that oral history. I operated in the Cambridge Cox group as a sort of second echelon then, prepared a few position papers, and was appointed to the pre-inauguration task force at that time.

I met Lyndon Johnson about that time but only casually in the context of a reception.

M: The date is what? What year?

W: That would be in 1960 at about the time of the convention. The President's strongest Cambridge supporter at that time was a professor at the Business School, who since has gone to the Washington Post. His name for the moment escapes me. He's business manager of the Post now. But anyway, I had met him on this occasion in 1960 when the President was beginning to campaign. I had no difficulty at that time--Carl Friedrich at Harvard was a strong Johnson supporter at that time. I want to say Dan Finn, who was also at

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the Business School, but that is not the professor.

M: Did you campaign for Kennedy then?

W: Yes. On Kennedy--I worked not so much in the campaign as I wrote a couple of speeches, drafts for him, for the Denver speech and a few, but never actually was on the campaign trail except in Massachusetts. But I was deeply involved then in the effort to reorganize and revitalize the State Democratic Party of Massachusetts. That period went on. We were in the circle that received the Inauguration tickets and so we went down and met the Vice President at that point.

My next political activity was essentially in 1962, when Ted was running against Eddie, [Edward J. McCormack Jr.] Ted Kennedy verses Eddie. And Charlie Haar and myself, Sam Beer, Jim Burns--and John Plank, who is now at Brookings, were the five eggheads who decided to stand for Teddy against Eddie and went on television for that effort. And that led to a relationship where I could never say existed with President Kennedy or with Bob. With President Kennedy I had only a few consultations; Bob Kennedy in the years since I've been here--on housing matters; Ted however has been a strong friendship and association since that time. Not a family friend, but in working relationships.

After the assassination in Dallas and that period of shock, Bill Moyers asked Ken Galbraith to call together a group in Cambridge to talk about programs. I was one of the members that went to that gathering. Dick Goodwin came up with Moyers. It was a very, very good meeting--a critical meeting from the point of view that Moyers was very impressive and did a lot to change the attitude of grief and release at this point. I had known Goodwin a little bit in the Kennedy campaign. He called me on a couple of occasions, and then the next real contact--

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M: What was it that Moyers did?

W: Well, Moyers laid out policy areas and issues of concern. This was a group of twenty or thirty of Harvard, M.I.T. faculty. That evening, and I've been trying to recall the time--it must have been somewhere in late winter or early spring--the first great accomplishments of the Johnson Administration were secured. The immediate transition time was over with. But Moyers was able to convey to that group the impression of an administration that was anxious for ideas and movement on the domestic field side. He had considerable personal knowledge that was quite impressive on the Budget Bureau and some of the other views, and a readiness, a receptivity for policy suggestions that really contrasted very well, contrasted favorably along the lines of the initial Kennedy organization of the brain trust. Also in one way he was more open than Sorensen. The Sorensen funnel was a tighter funnel and the ideas in effect went through Ted and two or three others. The Moyers operation, as it developed, became a much more open kind of system.

M: Does this mean he was receptive to a broader spectrum of ideas?

W: Yes, and this also means that he was quite prepared to let egos go along with their ideas, which is, as both of us know, a critical prerequisite in dealing with academics. You can't separate the two.

M: You were part of the Kennedy brain trust and then when Kennedy was killed, did you feel an alienation?

W: I was a part of the Kennedy brain trust, but I had not been one to go down and make the Washington transition. In effect I had become absorbed in the state party. Really, I was at a critical point and at the time of the 1960 election, I had not quite yet had tenure. Though I thought about Washington, I both had very good reasons for staying and I wasn't at that

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level of prominence or identity to really have anybody chase me for very high positions. So that I had not been involved in the closer cordon of guys who really were--the Galbraiths, the Schlesingers, the Chayes, and the people who had come down. That's a subject--how the academic community forms and reforms itself every few years--that is going to be the subject of a great book.

But anyway, the next real contact here, and up to this time except for a couple of casual handshakes, I had not known the President. Next was a call from Goodwin on the task force on Urban Affairs. I had worked for a summer at Bob Weaver's request, at the Secretary's request, on a task force for him.

M: Was this a White House task force?

W: No, the Weaver one was not. But the Goodwin one of 1964 was a White House task force. The task force, as you see, had escalated. The Budget Bureau found the 1960 task force an incredibly useful device to push against the agencies in the process legislative formation. So when Moyers reestablished the idea in 1964, Kermit Gordon was quite receptive; and instead of being out in hotel rooms in Idlewild Airport as in 1960 hoping the Democratic National Committee would pay at least your tourist fare, you had a staff in the Executive Office who had nice rooms; you had consultants, and you had what you needed to have. And that 1964 task force was late getting started. For some reason Goodwin appointed the urban one last. There's one other tangent that I think is important for this Administration. You will remember that Eric Goldman had been appointed by the President. Goldman had asked me down in February at the time the twenty-seven eggheads were appointed by the President, for the Rose Garden ceremony. I unfortunately was in Salzburg, Austria but I was put on that list. I had consulted with Paul

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Ylvisaker, consulted with Eric a couple of times, in which he sent a couple of memos into the President about what we must do in metropolitan areas, and some of the faint beginnings of Model Cities were identified there. Eric, as far as I could determine, did not favor the task force approach. This relationship between Goodwin and Goldman, I didn't know anything about, but I sensed some tension at this point. Milt Semer, then the Deputy Administrator of Housing, also was antagonistic to the task force, understandably and appropriately. At any rate Eric never came to any of the task force meetings.

The 1964 task force was a series of very high powered people. It was at the stage where a number of the intellectuals still doubted that there was an urban crisis. In the initial stages we had a very hard time getting any kind of consensus for an agenda. Jerry Cavanagh was the only mayor; Ralph McGill represented the press; and one of the Menninger brothers. [Karl] One of the elderly Menningers represented something, but he didn't believe in cities (I'm not sure whether they got the right Menninger). Anyway, he kept coming in appropriately saying we ought to all go back and live on the farm, at times. The net effect was that that was a tough (and the report shows it) report on which to get consensus. Catherine Bauer Wurster had died during the middle of it. I had the last letter from her before she fell off the cliff near her home. But what that document became was essentially an effort at an analytical document and as an indication of new directions to persuade the President of the character of the urban crisis. We were trying as much to knock down bogeymen or fanciful ideas and to talk straight as we were to come up with a particular laundry list. Rent supplements was the major thing to come out of that task force.

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M: Let me ask something about the origin of this. Did Lyndon Johnson order this task force?

W: Yes.

M: Where did the idea come from that this was needed?

W: My recollection is that Moyers made the proposal to the President, and the President authorized it in a series of task forces. There were fifteen at that time. John Gardner was the head of one; Joe Pechman was another. You know, there were a whole series of the first order (We must have a reunion one of these days!). Is the kind of detail you want?

M: Yes.

W: But Moyers recommended and the President went over every list; Goodwin and Moyers divided up a kind of responsibility with some others, I think, like Doug Cater, who by that time had joined. And Doug worked on some and there may have been others.

M: Does all of this fit into the concept of the Great Society?

W: Yes, this is where the Great Society is beginning to emerge. After the Galbraith meeting there were a couple of memoranda from me to Goodwin about urban problems. I was obviously responding both to Goodwin and to Goldman; cities were coming through; a couple of ideas were being dropped then, but this was the formulation. The Great Society speech had been made by that time in Ann Arbor, but the formulation of these groups, of the fourteen or fifteen task forces, was underway.

M: Let me ask this. Under Kennedy there had been concern over urban affairs and setting up a department of urban affairs. How does this fit in?

W: Kennedy had proposed it and said he'd appoint the Secretary. It had been shot down. There's a beautiful little case study of Brookings about that whole thing.

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M: Did you have anything to do with that?

W: No. In effect the Secretary as Administrator had read out the Kennedy task force--Joe McMurray, who had worked with the Secretary and who had been the chairman of the Kennedy Task Force. The two were not close, and the Secretary had read and thanked us for the task force when he was Administrator. But in effect the White House, Lee White, did what things that were done in urban affairs. The White House really looked to Dr. Weaver strongly for program development and a good deal of the D-3's came out of that. My association with urban affairs in the Kennedy time was working for Weaver for these three months in the summer of 1963, I guess, when we put together the initial planning business. But there was nothing like the focus on attention to urban affairs in the Kennedy time as was characterized in the Johnson era.

M: So then the urban problems are sharpened, are given greater dimension under Johnson than under Kennedy?

W: Yes. Advances had been made and the proposal for the new department, the first moderate income plan, the first metropolitan planning had arisen and fallen. Weaver was moving rapidly ahead but heavily constrained by the organization of HHFA. President Johnson's 1965 message was the first message that used a message on the cities instead of on housing. And it was the first message that had a footnote that said, "For cities, read city and suburb." And so you see the beginning embryonic bubbling up of the nation's concern about urban affairs, beginning in the Kennedy [Administration]. But the focus finally came out poverty, not cities, at that point.

M: But the idea is growing?

W: The idea is growing and what happens is that the 1964 task force represents

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the end of a debate about whether we've got an urban problem or not. That's fought out among the academics, Meyerson and Glazer and Paul Ylvisaker. In that task force, there was a series of meetings. They met for a number of weeks. I was a consultant.

M: Well, the Joint Center had met this problem earlier--

W: The Joint Center at that time was a collection of scholars. But you've got to realize, as Harrison characterizes that era, the Cambridge urbanists, except for me and Charlie Haar, were mostly optimists and Pollyannas. They were really convinced that things were getting better in American cities, and so they were not policy-oriented; and the only policy book that came out of the Joint Center in the early 1960's was Martin Anderson's Federal Bulldozer. Unfortunately that came out when most of us, when we reviewed the book, were away on summer vacations so I never saw the book until it got published.

M: Well, then, this 1964 Task Force is a climax to the whole problem in academic life as well as political life?

W: Yes, it begins when the 1960 Task Force was looking at housing programs and sticking together five or six things that Kennedy and Weaver could use against the people in their department in the agency they were entering. The 1964 Task Force becomes one where we finally say we've got to have, in addition to a department, some new programs and rent supplement comes out. It reappears in the 1965 message. The 1964 Task Force groups meet; the education people and Gardner make a major impression; we come out with the President's message on the cities and rent supplement, in effect. We turn in that report in December and I thank Goodwin and Dr. Weaver as Administrator, and then I go back to start to teach class. And in effect do so with a fair amount of success. I manage to stay out of Washington almost that whole semester. The President then appoints me a member of

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the Advisory Committee of the National Capital Transportation Agency.

M: What was that?

W: That was the agency trying to build the Washington subway, and I was appointed the national member. You had a good monthly meeting and you talked about policy, but it didn't have very much responsibility.

This task force represented a fairly intense internal debate about the nature, magnitude and character of the urban problem. And a decision [was reached] in 1964 that there was an urban crisis; but [there was] an inability to focus on a great, bold, new, dramatic program to respond to it. The 1964 Task Force provided a highly sophisticated analysis of the main characteristics of the urban setting of America and its problems. It's a good evaluation of ongoing programs and how they need to change. It's a flag that there's got to be more money put into the area. And then it's a rent supplement program and a moderate income and subsidy program or planning program. Both of these are envolved into places that will find their part into the 1965 Housing Act.

M: Is it significant that this task force occurred at this time, with academicians working in the government to point up this problem? Is that unusual? Is that unique?

W: It's unique. The task forces were in the process of evolving and they were evolved even more rapidly in 1965 and 1966. But what this is, is a movement of a task force from the brain trust, from essentially either window-dressing for the campaign--"See how many intellectuals I got to sign my advertisement?"--which Kennedy had developed, I think, initially with the response to the effort of the popularity of Stevenson on the campus. It had moved from that to a point as a recruitment device which Kennedy used brilliantly in his preinaugural and of pulling intellectuals into permanent positions. And the task force of 1964 represented, I think,

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a recognition (1) that if you get pulled into an operating position you don't think creatively very much any more, a position which after three years I subscribe to fairly heavily; and (2) the idea of involvement of outsiders in policy in a useful and effective and part-time way. This is a major innovation on how policy is made. It's an addition to the old pluralistic model, interest groups, and departments pushing up to the President, or the Rasputin, the Colonel House, in the White House.

M: Is Lyndon Johnson essential for this development? Would it have come anyway?

W: It would not have come, at least if one assumed Kennedy's reelection, because at that time the perceived intellectual potential within the White House and the various departments was of a high enough caliber that the President probably would have felt he did not need it, and the departments would have been resistant to this kind of endeavor. There would have been far more in-house task forces, and that's an interesting thing as indeed they're becoming that. I think Johnson was critical in terms of the President's determination for a major domestic program in a hurry; his determination for new directions and new ideas; his sense that this was the first time since the New Deal that we could really have political support and Congressional receptivity; that the moment was right for a major program; and his understanding that he couldn't produce it out of bureaucracy. You've got to remember that the President tried, as Majority Leader of the Senate, to produce a State of the Union message in contradiction to Eisenhower, and that really, in my judgment, never came off. He had a major influence on the space program; he knew what didn't work really in the development of policy and how complicated it was. And so I think his obvious desire to establish himself, his relationships back with an

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intellectual world, all make him fairly crucial on this. He did review each list of all the appointees; he did discuss them; and he did accept and reject, according to Moyers and Goodwin later on.

We went in, Goodwin and I on the phone, heavily in a preparation message, major internal fight--Bill Ross, now my deputy, then Budget Bureau was the staff guy (and this was the way Bill and I first met), was a critical guy with secretaries, administrators, Goodwin, and Moyers in putting together that housing message in legislation and getting the rent supplement down over the violent objections of Mike Manatos, Larry O'Brien, Henry Hall Wilson, and all the people who foresaw the trouble in trying to solve it on the Hill.

Except for the Transportation Agency and my monthly gab with John Clinton (who had been the Macy man on White House urban appointments). I had finished our task force and I was back trying to run the Political Science Department at M.I.T. Two things then happened in the summer of 1965. One, Moyers asked me, or really asked HHFA and the agency asked me, to write up a paper on the accomplishments of the preceding year in urban affairs and where we had gone. I thought that would be an easy assignment.

M: Which agency is this?

W: HHFA--housing. I thought it would be a pretty easy assignment, and so I said, "Yes." I thought I'd knock it off in a couple of days. It turned out to be excruciatingly complicated. It took me about three weeks to write twenty pages. The book never appeared, by the way. But the process of writing that piece of paper out forced me to go back over the policy from 1938 on in urban affairs and come to some personal conclusions about it. The adequacies and the inadequacies of the program. It ruined my damned vacation. It became critical to the next step. The next step occurs--

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M: Can you tell me what these conclusions were?

W: I'll tell you that the next time. Because there are three or four.

But the next historic event is an early July night in the White House Mess when Moyers reassembles all the chairmen of the previous years' task forces and we sit down to go around the next round. Gardner is there, I am there, Samuelson is there, Kaysen--all of us. Califano was introduced to the scene the first time. He has just come on board and he is introduced. But Moyers clearly is presiding. We have cocktails in the White House Mess; we have dinner; and midway in the dinner the President comes. We go around the room and say who we are and what we're doing. The President says a few remarks--superbly at home on domestic, a little bit ill-at-ease on foreign--the escalation then has not begun. August, [I'm not sure of this date] and Tonkin Bay has not occurred. He goes away; we go back to eating and drinking; he comes back in and then in an enormously eloquent--almost two hours--we range a series of problems ending up on the international front. First time Kaysen is there. For the first time in the ranks of intellectuals, I see the fissures that lately had begun to grow. Kaysen had been in the White House; he indicates reserve, also some of the others. The evening does not break up until 12:30 or 1:00 and then we all disband. A very, very, very, dramatic evening. Within three days the decision to start the next round of task forces had been made. And then 1965 occurs. The 1965 Task Force is the one that dreams up Model Cities.

SECOND SESSION:

M: Before we get into that, I wanted to ask you if you could summarize for me the origin of the rent supplement idea. This is going back some.

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W: Rent supplement and rent certificates. These various ideas have been around in the literature and in proposals for some years. There was an article in the Yale Law School Journal a year or so ago that traces it back to the Chamber of Commerce in 1937. And when the President heard about that, he was reported to have said that he wasn't sure the task force was innovative, or dealt with new ideas. Essentially the Republicans under Mr. Widnall had some claim for the rent certificate program. It had been discussed and reported on in the 1960 campaign. The chairman of the 1960 Kennedy task force was McGrath, who had put a paper together on it. It wasn't particularly new except the 1964 task force put it together. And here essentially Catherine Bauer Wurster and Bill Ross and Saul Klaman were on a sort of subgroup that began to take these various forms and proposals. Looking at the experience we were having with D-3 (moderate income housing that was just beginning) we tried, as we formulated the program, to put it in the context of filling the gap between the very poor and the public housing designed for that group and the moderate income group. It was that "gap" concept the original bill came down to Congress on, and it then subsequently got modified in one legislative process. The more complete reference for future history on this is that private staff paper that John Zacotti, my special assistant, put together after going through the files of the agency and the early history and the Yale Law Journal that I referred to.

M: To pick up where we left off before, you mentioned that in the summer of 1965 you wrote a paper for HHFA. In that, you were asked to summarize the accomplishments and failures of urban affairs program, and you mentioned that you came to some conclusions, but you didn't have time to mention what the conclusions were.

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W: Well, the theme that we stressed there was when you went back to the efforts of the 1930's and 1940's and 1950's to deal with problems of the cities, you concluded that these efforts came piecemeal--housing and then renewal, then community facilities loans and advance planning--and they came bootlegged under the title of another national purpose. You either had to save a money market as in the establishment of "Fanny May," or you had to promote employment or increase housing production or house the veterans or what have you, but the notion of guiding the process of urban development, of responding in assisting communities to shape their own environment was never really put to the forefront. The paper portrays some of the reason for these ideological interest groups and what have you. But then it came to the conclusion in the 1965 act--the Kennedy Administration made the beginning, and the 1965 act was the first step in a sort of generalized recognition in community facilities and water and sewer programs and its rent supplements. Its experience of moderate income and its great new emphasis on planning was a sort of takeoff point. It left some questions at the end of it--whether or not the stock of urban knowledge was sufficient to really make these things work, whether the academics knew that much, whether there would be enough resources and funding for it, whether there would be enough capability at the state and local level. But what I was trying to say was that for the first time urban affairs had moved up on a national agenda to a position of some prominence.

M: Now, about that meeting that was called at the White House Mess. You mentioned that you could observe the fissures that were forming, splits that were forming in the academic community. Could you elaborate on that?

W: It may have been the fact that the lack of earlier sensitivity on my

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part--M.I.T. (the Department of Political Science) had been a hawk department for some time and had been committed to the general Southeast Asia policy (Kennedy and Johnson) as it evolved. So that I, being a domestic urban guy and leaving to my colleagues in international the responsibility that if I took care of the cities they ought to take care of the world. I had been sort of going alone with a general atmosphere of academic defense and indeed I had signed with Pool, and Bloomfield Kaufman and Lucian Pye a letter to the New York Times in support of the President's policy earlier that year that occasioned a response by the President. It was the first letter the President wrote me directly.

That night, on the July night in the White House Mess, the comments of two or three other people from other universities showing concern about the escalation and the developments in Viet Nam were the first that I had really heard in serious academic circles. I think I made a statement that night to the President, something about the distinction between the noisy and the numerous academics. But I'm afraid as the years went on they became numerous and noisy at that time. But the mood of that evening (this was [again I am not sure of the date] before the Bay of Tonkin) I thought was just very impressive. There was strength and power, decision and vigor with which the President talked about domestic affairs and about his programs, and beauty and rent supplements and the others, and the anguish he expressed in terms of growing concerns of the war and the preoccupation. The evening which began around 7:00 and concluded after midnight, had a series of eloquent statements by the chairmen of the task forces and the Presidential responses.

M: Then after this was when you got into Model Cities, is that right?

W: Yes, I went back and in early September Charlie Schultze called me to ask if I would serve on a Budget Bureau task force on problems of regional

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administration. Then Steve Bailey, the dean at Maxwell's School of Syracuse, was chairing. I was glad to do that because this is a subject that has occupied me for some time. And I was at work with that task force when Califano phoned and asked if I could come in to see him. That was the first time he and I had talked at any length other than at that party. This time Joe had a notion that they wanted another urban task force; we talked about names. Walter Reuther had been in to see either Califano or the President somewhere in that summer, picking up an intimation of what was then known as Demonstration Cities.

M: What was Walter Reuther's interest in this?

W: Walter, in a general social concern, had gone to the White House to state his concern for the need now for a massive push in the cities. Walter was thinking in terms of what we now think of as the Vice President's Marshall Plan for the Cities; he was thinking of a major commitment of resources and manpower. He had clearly had some discussions--Califano mentioned Reuther on the task force, mentioned Whitney Young as a possibility, Edgar Kaiser, Charlie Haar, who had been the chairman of the Beauty task force and an old colleague of mine from Harvard, [William] Rafsky; Kermit Gordon was put on by Charlie Schultze because Charlie could see Walter Reuther's bending the budget completely out of balance. There was some give and take. I've generally been of the persuasion that they let the White House shape the task force except for some obvious people that you would or would not go with; and then you work with them and what have you. At any rate, this task force was quite different in terms of the reasonable decline in the number of so-called "eggheads." There were only Charlie and me. Much greater personalities and reputations came in. It was obviously moving from a Presidential and Executive office institutional

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mechanism now and to an immediate concern location in the White House and the White House staff itself. And that to me has sort of been the natural revolution to these until the succeeding year when they exploded in numbers and then have shifted to more publicly visible continuing exercises like the Kaiser Committee.

But at any rate, Califano and I met in late September or early October. The dates are retrievable, they escape me now. We talked a little bit awhile; talked about people; about demonstration cities; and then I suggested we also do something about metropolitan planning. Shultze delivered himself of a very good memo about doing for the one-fifth people who were poor and something for the four-fifths urban people that weren't, as a framework. I went back and put together a general kind of outline for my own, and then we started the task force. Harry McPherson was really more directly following and working with the task force than Califano then and McPherson it was who attended the meetings. We met up next day in his room in a small office, a small conference room on the third floor in the White House. I there evolved a practice for guys who were as busy as these people of Saturday meetings (Saturdays and Sundays) which we had for a successive number of weekends. We met with Mr. Weaver, Bob Weaver, who was then an administrator, and Milt Semer, his deputy, the first session. Charlie Haar and I selected Chet Rapkin after thinking of a couple of other people as staff member. Califano called him down from Pennsylvania; Chester came down; Levinson got us a little office. And we were over in the Maritime Commission on 14th Street, four or five offices. Rapkin put together a staff; he used to meet Sunday mornings with me in M.I.T. until we got the task force going, and then Monday mornings; and then we began to come down here.

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The mode of operation for the task force was probably best described in a memo by Harry McPherson in which we used the staff people to prepare a paper every week and give us a target to shoot at. And then Jack Conway, who sat in with Walter [Reuther] all the way, or Walter more frequently would be the eloquent spokesman for major investments in the city; Kermit Gordon would be the defender of the federal purse in a brilliant and sympathetic way, but played the role; Whitney Young would speak of the rising expectations and the need to deal with the Negro newcomers to the city. These exchanges would go on. Eddie Kaiser at that time participated only rarely. He sent his chief staff guy, Johnson; and Rafsky and Haar and myself tried to play the role of the urban pro.

Early in November when the law establishing the department actually went into effect, sixty days after the signing of the act, and the President did not determine on a secretary, Califano phoned me and told me that the President had appointed two other members of the task force: Ben Heineman, president of the Northwestern Railroad, and Senator Ribicoff. Charlie Haar and I then took off (that was on a Saturday) and met Ribicoff on Sunday morning at the Carlton Hotel in New York and chatted with him. I phone Heineman. Heineman joined the group and became thereafter a major and a strong participant on the organizational side which was a particular charge that Ribicoff and he were given. Abe never joined us until the last meeting. But Jerry Sonosky was his staff man. We did not then have the policy that I think I would insist on now, only the principals meeting. The principals who attended got caught up in the subject matter and the internal tempo of the meetings and they were all basically full participants.

Reuther was quite faithful; Gordon and Whitney Young [also]. We

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went through the meetings with both the character and effort of the Model Cities (Demonstration Cities) being worked on, with a serious effort to say something about the issue of whether we wanted to be experimental and genuinely demonstrate, or whether we wanted to use this as a vehicle for shifting resources. There was a time reasonably heated. This is how I ultimately tried to resolve that one: by setting out Model Cities in discreet units so you could go up to almost any level of budgetary activity on solid concepts around--numbers came to--For instance, there was some argument, some discussion, some concern, for just picking one or four or five so you can concentrate resources and actually make a model. That seemed difficult. It seemed difficult enough to stop with our original seventy, so far as Congressional reception would be.

I found the meetings always intellectually exciting and stimulating and beneficial. At the end, one of the persistent themes that set Reuther and Conway in a discussion with Whitney Young was the future of the Community Action Program, whether it should be brought over to HUD or left in OEO. We recommended that it be, as we did on water treatment from HEW, and Kermit Gordon tended to oppose that, thinking that HUD is an agency primarily for physical development; I believed that that was no longer possible, that you had to get the social component in a change. Looking back three years later I can understand why the President did not make that determination of transfer. In one way it was an asset because as we went about organizing HUD, we had all we could do by just getting a coherent department built up over the last few years out of our existing responsibilities. On the other hand it has seriously impaired our capacity in Model Cities and others to move quickly administratively. But it was a close decision.

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At any rate, the task force met, drafted, redrafted; there were phone calls, Califano, McPherson, as to whether we could actually produce in time because we were starting late; they gave us a December 15 deadline and we met it. I wrote the first two drafts, cleared it, got telephone communications, comments from the participants, then made the changes, got a unanimous assent, came down and wrote the last bit of it in my own hand in the Maritime Building office, thanked the staff, gave it to McPherson, and took off for consulting--to making up lost time in California. I came back; Levinson phoned off-and-on during Christmas week about how this was to be presented to the President and then Moyers phoned as to some details; Moyers asked me to come down; I came down and met with Bill and Califano briefly; they took me in to see the President; we talked about the report; we then went down to the White House Mess and talked about the possibility of my coming down [to Washington]. I made stipulations that only if it was the desire not only of the President, but of Secretary Weaver and a stipulation of a couple of years has been utmost limit. I knew enough to know I couldn't get away with one anyway. And then we brought up the need for White House support for a department of HUD.

Then the next occurrence was Moyers' asking me to bring my wife Peg down, calling at 10:00 to get down for a Cabinet meeting at 2:00 or 3:00 which we did; and then the President's announcement of the dual appointment of the Secretary and me.

M: He proposed your appointment when you presented your report on Model Cities?

W: Yes. Actually, in my reports both times I simply wrote a transmittal letter, put it together and let the relevant Budget Bureau or staff member

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deliver it to the White House; I did not ever formally present it. At the time I met with the President, after that had been presented and I guess they had decided to go with it, we talked about general urban problems for a few minutes. Then he said really the boys, meaning Moyers and Califano, had a few propositions they wanted to put up to me. That's the way the appointment was gone into--in eliptical fashion.

M: Before you carry on with the Model Cities story, in this appointment was there ever raised any racial issue?

W: No. The fact that I come from the South may have had a consideration. I think there were, you know, rampant rumors about who the President was going to appoint as Secretary and great speculation. I made my statement to Bill Moyers about why I thought Bob Weaver was the best man some time earlier at the time of that lunch, and how and why I believed so. John Clinton had been phoning from the White House in the general canvass of names. Clinton had had that practice for some years with me especially on people in urban, but none of these had really stacked up against the Secretary. I made a statement. Bill later asked me to come back and write it out, which I did. The appointment was announced. The President took us back to his office and gave the Secretary a copy of what I had said. This was very helpful in initiating the department and very, very wise.

M: This was a statement that you thought Weaver was a capable man?

W: Well, Weaver was by all odds the best man for the job--how and why. So then we just began starting in the organization of the department. I would guess the important things to characterize would be that the President gave us an absolute free hand in terms of people. I can remember going over and having lunch with him when he had appointed two assistant secretaries.

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He gave us a free hand in organization; he supported and took most of the recommendations on most of the legislation; he undertook to guide us on legislative matters. But by and large his support has been constant and strong. My relationships with the President are such that for the most part of his Administration I have seen him once a week or once every two weeks in formal circumstances, Cabinet meetings, office visits, discussions. My relationships are those of the Administration, not personal or social. But the official support has been very constant.

The passage of the Model Cities program--Bob Sample's story in the Times with a few exceptions such as the role of labor, I think it's a good account of that; I've tried to expand on it in the opening case study of the textbook that Emmette Redford and I wrote last year. And that story was a cliff-hanger involving an incredible set of relationships with the participants old and new, the departmental history that we'll transmit over--we're late because we're hoping to make it a genuine instrument rather than just a flotsam of papers. I hope it will carry the flavor of where the department has gone.

M: In the Model Cities struggle, was there a chance that it might have died in the middle of 1966?

W: Everybody thought it was dead. The New York Times in an editorial said, "Demonstration Cities is dead." You see, you have to remember that program was not well received by the fraternity, the mayors and the urban renewal administrations and public housing people. They just wanted more money; they didn't understand either the President's strategy (given the great criticism that renewal was under in the Congress) of having a new program that gave an add-on to renewal. It gave additional money, in effect, tripled appropriations but made it look like something new. But

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we were under great attack because the regular local administrations just wanted more cash and no control. And they felt that renewal, their style which was tearing down houses and evicting poor people and not restoring the stock, was perfection. So there were a couple of bitter clashes there, and there was lukewarm reception of Model Cities by the liberal elements and the press who again wanted something new and massive and thought that experimentation--what I call the politics of innovation--should just not take place.

What was becoming clear in January 1966, of course, was that the war was getting expensive and the need for taxes was being discussed; the conflict between the Great Society and the cost and tax requirements was becoming clear. The President went early in that time to talk to the mayors at one of the conferences here in Washington (in which I started to accompany him and then did not), in which I tried to write a few remarks the night before. The President was then preoccupied on savings and the budget and on postponing postponable expenditures, and he went and told the mayors that they ought to do the same thing. And this did not go over very well. The mayors wanted more cash then.

And I think the three years have characterized, as we've put in national goals, national policies, some strain with our constituents. We are not a department that behaves in the model of Louie Brownlow in responding to our constituents. One of the great misunderstandings about the Cabinet on the outside now, the sub-Cabinet, is the belief that the pluralistic model of Cabinet and Executive still operates; that every Cabinet person is a representative of his particular interest group and constituents. I think McNamara broke the pattern there and then [that] the other Secretaries have followed through. Though there are exceptions.

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You understand the membership of the Cabinet and the sub-Cabinet now passed to technical professional people. Increasingly sophisticated about their jobs, there's nobody in this department, Assistant Secretary or above, who can be called an amateur. And they are highly responsive to the President.

M: Is the meeting in Califano's office, the so-called "Model Cities is Dead" meeting, significant?

W: Oh, yes. What had occurred was that we had been preoccupied with getting the appropriations for rent supplements and won it by one vote in the Senate. We'd been working on that; we had no legislative liaison; Semer departed and had left us and also Harry Smith. We threw in Sid Spector, as sort of somebody into the dike. And we were just beginning and we were also trying to organize the department, which had for six months not done anything in the interim period. So we were trying simultaneously reorganization and legislation and appropriations, which is a three-ring circus you won't often want to get into.

We woke up to the fact that the staff of the House committee had just not thought very much of this bill and didn't think they could get it through; they wanted to just go back on planning and had produced a bill on planning. At that time I talked to Califano, the Secretary talked to Califano, I talked to the Vice President. The Vice President intervened twice with strategic telephone calls that were just very significant, and then we had the meeting in Califano's office to get to work. I went up to try with Charlie Haar, Semer who was in the White House then, and Manatos to talk to Don Nichol and Muskie; we got very little in that meeting. I went back a couple of other times. Then Joe and O'Brien went on and gradually Ed began to work--to make the changes. It was a critical meeting of Don Nichol, Larry Levinson, myself and Ash Foard (Associate General Counsel of HUD) in the White House, on a night

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when we put together some Muskie changes and my changes.

But by and large that account of Sample is quite accurate. You know, what fascinates me now is that I think I said that in the introduction to the Ray Bauer book--participation, decision-making is no substitute for scholarship and analysis and overview. You only know what slice of reality you were engaged in at that time. You have to rely on somebody else's providing the information of what others are doing. When you're a participant, they're far less likely to do it than when you are an observer. So I come back to saying that as far as I experienced, these accounts are pretty good. I'm sure you'll find that there is general agreement on what happened there. O'Brien became the key figure in the legislative effort.

M: Is the position of Milt Semer important in this? From the information that I have, he opposed it at one time toward the end in the legislative process and then there was some sort of compromise involving him.

W: I think he felt that the original House version (the staff version that would have made it only a planning bill with no money and gotten us nowhere in my judgment) was the best; and in his judgment, the only thing that could have gotten to the House. I'm not sure that there was any compromise; we didn't compromise except in rewriting with Muskie and that was reasonable, not substantial. It was damned useful, but it was not substantial at the concept. The big agreement that went on with the subcommittee and the committee people was that we tried through the Senate first and we wouldn't force the House to go through a hard tough fight with an uncertain future. You'll remember that they had just had the civil rights--had done that in civil rights in the Senate. So we did agree to take it through the Senate first, and then we had to--Paul Douglas was running for

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reelection; so Muskie became the logical guy. I don't think after the decision to go, Milt participated very much. But I don't know that. I did not know what went on in the White House side of it.

M: Did you have any close relation with Muskie's helping to get the bill reported out?

W: Yes. The department kind of stumbled--the White House role was key--Califano and O'Brien. But all of us were kind of scrambling around together with Muskie. The Senator and I had known each [other] not well, we got to meet each other a couple of times; and Don Nichol and I got to like each other, and we began a very close rapport in the tactical way of moving that bill along. By that time Spector had organized the urban alliance and it was beginning to move; and we had broken out of boundaries of our old constituent groups. I always thought I'd remember the exact sequence, who did what to whom. And I don't know. But I remember that essentially after Larry and Joe went up to Maine and persuaded the Senator, which was one critical thing, then the Department picked up on the headcount on the visits. I did an awful lot of visits with members of the House and Senate. I would say that in the month of August and September that more than half my time was on the Hill.

M: Is there any important significance in the shift from the phrase "Demonstration Cities" to "Model Cities?"

W: Yes. Congressman Stevens of Georgia (Bob Stevens) made the comment he didn't like the name--there were enough demonstrations going on in the cities at this time. And also the newspaper people claimed that it made for such a lousy, long headline. We had thought about other names: Pilot Cities, All-American Cities, things like that; at one time there was a whole new compromise draft that was discarded, but written between the White House

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and us. But Model Cities finally--I would guess that Larry Levinson was the author of that. It was after we got through the act and signed it. Stevens still kept complaining, and I knew we didn't like it by then. I think Larry came up with Model Cities.

M: Two questions which you may be able to answer shortly, maybe not: Can you explain to me the trouble in the formation of the Department of Transportation and HUD over mass transit?

W: Yes. Operating parallel to the Model Cities task force back in 1965 was the proposal for establishing the Department of Transportation. And Charlie Zwick had a major hand in formulating this with Califano's working on both of these. In the early days of the department when that came out originally, mass transportation was scheduled then automatically to go from the new HUD to the new DOT. Charlie Haar and I noted this, suggested to Califano that we wait a year, and wait to see if DOT was in fact established before we upset the troops. And Joe and the President agreed. So mass transportation was suspended with the provision that it be studied a year, which went on. In that year Charlie Haar activated a program, pushed it forward on many fronts, shifted it, gave it a social context with his buses and Rand D and what have you, and became strongly persuaded that it [would] flourish in HUD. The Secretary and I really figured this was a very complex one as did Boyd, but the weight of the evidence of the Transportation (with the name it's hard to have something called mass transportation going on outside that department), and the weight of the whole evidence of the origins of DOT had it clearly appropriate to place it there.

What then occurred was our concern that not just mass transportation but all forms of transportation, particularly highways, fit into the

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the context of urban development and in the context of general community growth. What emerged then was a kind of lead agency concept of HUD as principal federal presence in environmental urban development. This was what the organization plan number two in effect finally accomplished, and the agreement that came around last month confirmed it. For the first time HUD comments authoritatively and systematically on the impact of all forms of transportation in the urban condition and the highways, which I regard as very vital.

Now somewhere early in the planning stage before things get set in concrete, somebody other than the highway people looks at the impact. The same division is in our research, impact research versus internal systems research, and the interagency committee that is now functioning between both departments; both are indeed in on planning and federal assistance. I think we are beginning to separate out these thoughts very well. We've had a number of misunderstandings that will always inevitably come up in this sort of setting; the joint letter Secretary Weaver and Boyd sent to Javits at his request represents in my view the best statement of how this organization should work.

M: Another miscellaneous question: HUD has been charged with having no interest in rat extermination. What is your position on this and the idea of a rat extermination bill?

W: Well, that's the only one I ever lost in the legislative front. The genesis of the rat control business or the rat aid or what-have-you goes back to Ribicoff hearings with the Senator's exchange with John Gardner about rats. It shook John fairly strongly and John went back and set up a task force. It reported back and made to the Secretaries--HUD, OEO, Shriver, Labor, I guess, and HEW--a task formal report of the interagency group,

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recommending a program and recommending that HUD be in charge. The Secretary took that (partly to respond to the criticism of no concerns over the problem) as an immediate emergency mandate.

The Secretary took this as a principal element he wanted in the 1967 rural and urban poverty bill. And so advocated it to the extent that I think he accepted a couple of things (assignments to poverty and to agriculture) that otherwise he might not accept except for having HUD in the clear role of the rat program. Now, I'm conscious of the Anderson article in the New York Times of last spring that speaks of the department's reluctance to go forward in Model Cities here, rats or anything else, and I just think the White House characterizations of these were not in tune with the sequence of events. The Secretary's initiative in this instance is very clear and very intense and you could see it in all the drafts. The part where I think you would have to assign culpability thereafter is primarily with me.

In the context of the 1966 act and the 1968 act, I had not regarded our legislative program as too substantial and wanted to concentrate instead on appropriations and on organization. So that in terms of undertaking strong legislative leadership, in 1967, I really regarded this essentially as the OEO poverty year which it turned approximately to be. That's what I thought the signals were from the White House when they used poverty instead of cities at this juncture; therefore, I was functioning and Sid Spector? was functioning on appropriations. We allowed an impression that this program was not significant, and indeed rats were kind of funny. You know, after the Model Cities. We didn't pick up any great speeches on it or anything else.

Then we agreed to a legislative strategy recommended by House staff of separating out the rats from the omnibus bill on the ground that the

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omnibus bill was kind of technical and inconsequential, that there were a lot of things the people didn't like about it, and Congress was in a bad mood but everybody had to be in favor of rat eradication, and let's get that out and have a nice easy one out. This also is a technique that members of the House staff committee had long wanted to try; it gets you through a lovely parliamentary cycle of complexity and moves and motions between the Senate and the House. So I agreed that strategy and the boss, the Secretary did reluctantly, and so did the White House. It was a sort of, "It's all up to you" basis. I went down and indicated to the Congressmen that this was the way we wanted to proceed. By that time Spector had left and there was no head of Congressional liaison and we operated on this on an interim basis.

So it was only a couple of days before that I realized that we might have some problems, and began to do the work that you have to do on a piece of legislation. But I still thought that this would make a rousing debate. Then I went down--took Liz Drew down with me that day. We kidded later; it was the one time I took her down to show her a legislative triumph. It was the one major piece of legislation I had lost and we had the debate and saw that we were in trouble. There was another element to this. Henry Reuss, the Congressman from Milwaukee on our committee, bright, able, intellectual, didn't like the bill because it continued grant-in-aid categorization, and he wanted it under the general authority of HEW, where it came out. And Henry and I got a little bit heated toward one another on that one, because I regarded his view as an obsessively academic discussion that far down the line.

That's the only one we lost; we lost it not because the Secretary didn't take the initiative, or because we had to be pushed by the White

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House, or what have you, but essentially because on the whole theory of the span of attention and how much time you can devote to what issue, I didn't rate it the level I should have. I think we won the political issue; we got the bill at the end through HEW; we now have an interagency agreement on HEW with it. I regard it, as a matter of administrative indifference which departments runs it, and we only were following the original task force; and I'm sure we got better politics out of just the defeat. But that's essentially where the slippage came.

M: That concludes the questions I have and I want to thank you for the interview.

W: Not a bit. I enjoyed it.

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By Robert C Wood

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