INTERVIEW III

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INTERVIEWEE: ADAM YARMOLINSKY

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: I think we were just at the point of going into the question of Robert Kennedy's view of whether a new agency was needed.

Y: Yes. I noticed the question, and I just don't remember. I would think that temperamentally he would agree because he was always for bypassing the existing organizations and setting up something new. We did a certain amount of that in other areas, the famous inter-agency youth committee, which was to circumvent the State Department and USIA, or at least the stodgy parts of it. But no, I don't remember specifically.

G: Anything on a cabinet-level committee? Did he advocate that to your recollection?

Y: Not to my recollection, and I would think that he would be more sophisticated and would know better.

G: I guess at this point I might ask you to discuss his input overall as you recall, say, community action.

Y: I think it was all indirect. I think it was all through the juvenile delinquency committee, and that was [Richard] Boone and [David] Hackett. I think he was still probably--I wouldn't say sulking in

his tent, but not wanting to be associated with a Johnson Administration enterprise particularly, and busy with his own affairs. And if Shriver was going to do it, all the more reason that he wasn't going to do it.

G: There's been some suggestion that Shriver was initially not enthusiastic about community action, and it was Robert Kennedy who urged him to accept this part of the program.

Y: If that occurred I have no recollection of it. I was not aware of it.

G: Did the Department of Labor oppose the inclusion of a youth work component in community action, fearing that it might serve as a substitute for the pending Youth Employment Act?

Y: I was trying to remember what the pending Youth Employment Act was. Was it different from the Neighborhood Youth Corps?

G: Yes.

Y: And did it go through?

G: No, I gather that it was sidetracked.

Y: Well, I think what happened was that we took a number of things that weren't going anywhere and we put them together and made apple pie. I would think that so long as the Department of Labor got to control their piece of it they didn't so much care what it was called.

G: How about BOB? What was their position throughout this . . .?

Y: Well, there wasn't a BOB position, there was a [Charles] Schultze-[William] Capron position, and I think they were more inclined to be sympathetic with our notion of a program that was a lot of pieces, rather than all community action. The all community action thing

was--it's hard to remember, I don't remember that Capron was then BOB or Council of Economic Advisers. But they went along with the changes that we had in mind. Yet the original package was a [Walter] Heller--was Kermit Gordon then director of the Budget? I guess he was. It was a Heller-Gordon package. That was all community action, and why weren't their agencies solidly behind them in keeping it that way I can't remember. There was no idealogical resistance. The only issue we fought them on was whether the new agency would be in the Executive Office or not.

G: And they opposed that?

Y: Yes. Because it was not neat, it was a bad principle, bad precedent, and it was.

G: Before we turned on the tape we were talking about what seemed to me to be a reason for launching the War on Poverty, and that was the large percentage of youth who were being rejected from the draft.

Y: Yes, and I said that that was only a piece of argumentation, of propaganda, if you will. Sure, it was another demonstration of the fact that there were still a lot of people who were suffering from poverty in the United States, but it wasn't to make more people fit for the draft. It was not a [inaudible].

G: Do you recall the Title III land reform proposal?

Y: I do, and I think it emerged right out of the task force, that we were thinking of, you know, what should the pieces be? What should we do for rural people, farmers? Somebody said, well, isn't this a problem. It just came out of staff level discussions. I don't think

any of it was anybody's pet idea that they were pushing. And they did a little research and found that other people had proposed it and it had some background, but I think it just came out in the normal course of staff conversations.

G: Why wasn't there a minimum wage proposal for migrant workers? Do you recall? This was something that was discussed in committee, and I gather some people may have favored it and others didn't.

Y: Discussed in the congressional committees?

G: In the committee hearings, right.

Y: Gee, I draw a blank on that. It would not have fitted into the framework of the act, but that wasn't the reason for not doing it. I just don't remember it coming up, and I'm surprised to hear it was in the committee hearings because I don't remember the discussion of it. We were talking about social services for migrant workers, and we were talking about applying the community action principle to give them more opportunity to do something about their legitimate grievances and so forth. But I don't remember minimum wage. And you say, [reading from outline] "Was there an urban orientation? Did it focus primarily on urban instead of rural poverty?" We talked about that.

G: Last time, right.

Y: Yes. "How did the task force function? How were decisions made? What sort of records of meetings were kept?" It did not function as a democratic body. We had staff meetings, but the staff meetings were just to keep everybody abreast of what people were doing. We were

formulating legislation, but I think whoever happened to be around at the time we were--and people got assigned pieces to write.

G: I have a copy of some of the background papers listed.

Y: I remember that. That came out of one of the early meetings when we--I wish I could remember. You see, this was the kind of thing that I did. I said, "Oh, yeah, we're having a lot of conversation. What are we going to do? Who's going to do what?" That is from time to time my role in organizations. So we agreed that people would take on assignments, and the person who took on the assignment really got to put together the proposal. The proposal would come back and presumably be discussed in a meeting of whoever happened to be around, because the final decision was going to be Shriver's anyway. If it wasn't Shriver's, in Shriver's absence it was mine, or I would make a decision and bring it to him to make sure he agreed with it.

G: The members didn't take a vote then?

Y: Oh, no. No. None of that sort of foolishness.

G: So presumably, let's say, Wilbur Cohen would present a background paper on education and then the other ones--

Y: But it wouldn't be a background paper in an academic sense; it would be a set of proposals. It would be programmatic: let's propose this to do this and this much money. And then we, and whoever "we" was is hard to remember, but it was whoever happened to be around and wanted to participate and offer suggestions with the understanding that this was not, as I say, a democratic organization.

G: What was the atmosphere like in these discussions?

Y: It was very open.

G: Was it amicable?

Y: Yes.

G: Was it like a college seminar room where different people would argue?

Y: Well, it wasn't like a college seminar room. It was more like a college seminar room today, I suspect, because there wasn't very much theoretical argument. It was more, "How are we going to do this?" and it kept coming back to "We've got to make up our mind; we've got to stay within budgetary guidelines; we've got to have it done by a certain date. We're under a great time pressure."

G: Would several of these sessions go on concurrently, or would you devote, say, one day to education and another day to community action and so on, and the same people participate in different ones?

Y: I don't think sessions would go on concurrently because--well, that's not true. There were probably small sessions that I was perhaps even dimly aware of, where some of the junior members would get together and hash things out and then they would bring in a proposal to a big meeting. There was no question of "you're on the task force, and you're not." It was whoever happened to be around, and nobody was excluded. People generally excluded themselves when they did not take an interest in a programmatic process, in a practical process. But I think when we were putting together the legislation--I think, and my memory is dim--that either Shriver or I was in the chair, and that didn't mean terribly much.

G: A lot of people remember you chairing the meetings rather than Shriver.

Y: Oh, I think I probably chaired more meetings than Shriver, because very early on he was spending hours and hours and hours on the Hill.

G: And again, would he bring back the data from the Hill?

Y: No. No. No, this was not a process of exchanging ideas with the Hill; this was a process of selling them. He might come back and say, "I'm having trouble. We need to satisfy this or that."

G: But I gather there was very little input from the Hill in terms of the formulation.

Y: That's right, there was very little input, except for things like the [James J.] Delaney problem or the Edith Green problem. What you got from the Hill was you have to satisfy this or that constituency, you've got to sort of jigger things around, but these were not fundamental suggestions on the content of the program.

G: So in any event, in his absence you would chair the meeting, and then would you report to him or discuss with him what had been said and give the arguments and your recommendations, and then he would make a decision accordingly, or how would you [proceed]?

Y: No. No. Nothing as fancy as that.

G: Oh. Well, how would you--?

Y: I would say, "All right, this is the way we're going to do it," and at some point I would tell him about it. I wish I could remember. I'm really reconstructing sort of this is the way it must have been, rather than remembering specifically this is the way it was. But I know that I did not go through a process which I might have gone through with somebody who was more formal and systematic. I would

always say to people who were involved in a meeting, "If you don't like my decision, you should always feel free to go to Shriver." But I don't remember cases in which they did, although there must have been some. I don't remember being reversed, but then that may be selective memory.

But by and large it seemed to me what I would bring to Shriver would not be my decisions for approval but the areas where I was uncertain or where I thought I didn't see the clear answer, and I'd say, "I don't know how we ought to do this. We could do it this way or this way. What do you think?" But again, I am really doing a job of reconstruction here and not giving you straight out of my memory. I don't know, others might help. Shriver could help. I'm not sure that others could, because I think that kind of thing went on between the two of us, so I don't think there were other observers. But on occasion there were a lot of people around, some of whom may remember.

G: Were any of these recommendations written down, or decisions written down, do you recall?

Y: There were no minutes of the meetings. The written results were, "You take your draft and do this to it and bring it back and it will be a piece of the legislation." Of course, we had to write the committee report. I can't remember, was there a House report and a Senate report, or was there just one?

G: Well, there were two different pieces of legislation. I mean, the Senate introduced its bill and the House its own.

Y: Well now you see, I didn't remember that. Didn't they both introduce the administration bill?

G: Yes, I guess they were pretty [similar].

Y: Sure. But did they both hold hearings?

G: The Senate largely had the House hearings as I recall.

Y: That's what I thought.

G: They did have a few witnesses.

Y: There was probably not a Senate report. There was a House report and a conference report, and we had to draft both of them. But that is generally the practice. Not always the practice. I mean, there are committees that really do their own work, and I think probably more so nowadays now that the congressional staffs have grown so. But in those days they were too busy to do their own work, at least that kind of work.

G: Well, a lot of these task forces issued reports to the President, but I gather this one just issued the message and the legislation itself.

Y: Well, we also drafted the President's message and redrafted and re-drafted and re-redrafted. But I don't remember a written report to the President. There may have been, but I don't remember it.

G: I think the other day you talked about funding limitations.

Y: Yes, and I said I didn't think the funding limitations affected the operations.

G: Did it affect the consideration of legislation though, of programs? For example, would you have favored a massive manpower program if you thought you could have gotten funds for it?

Y: Yes. I mean, we would have favored a big jobs program, only we couldn't get the money for it. That was the thing that we wanted to do with the cigarette tax that got knocked down.

G: Another way I suppose of phrasing this is to what extent was the relative appeal a component may have to Congress considered in the adoption or rejection of that component?

Y: Well, if we couldn't sell it to Congress there wasn't any point in putting it in. We had to knock out things later on because Congress wouldn't buy them. The most important thing was we had to stay within the President's budget. There were no add-ons to the budget. This was all out of money that was in the President's budget.

G: Bill Kelly perceived three different stages in the task force composition, the first phase being largely theoreticians and the second phase, in the summer, of planners and logisticians, and then in late summer an operationally-oriented [phase].

Y: Well, I would say that's generally true except that the theoreticians dropped out much earlier because they dropped out--when did the program go to Congress, in March, didn't it?

G: The end of March.

Y: I would say it was January, theoreticians, and February--well, the operationally-oriented began pretty early. Planners and logisticians from February through June or July, and the operational people--I mean, I was negotiating with the people who were going to be the heads of the various divisions about how many GSA teams they could have in April and May. So it was all kind of overlapping.

G: How did the task force communicate its day-to-day activities to the White House or report on its deliberations?

Y: Largely in conversations that I had, that Shriver had with Moyers and I had with Moyers and Redmon.

G: These were the two people at the White House that you dealt with?

Y: Well, I dealt with Moyers and with Hayes Redmon, who was Moyers' assistant.

G: Did you during the course of this dialogue get a sense of what the White House wanted or what their perception of the program was?

Y: Well, the White House, again we got a sense of the effect that Johnson wanted and we got very specifically what Moyers thought was a good idea and not a good idea, but they weren't telling us how to do it substantively, they were telling us how it had to fit with their political problems.

G: Can you recall any particular example here?

Y: Well, I remember very close to the end when it was almost through, Moyers calling me and saying, "How important is this governor's veto?" and I gave him the pros and cons. He said, "Okay." And that happened several times on things. "What would happen if you couldn't have X or Y or Z?" and I would tell him, you know, it's not the end of the world. This is a familiar sort of question one is often asked by the White House and people in the White House: "You've got this in your legislative program, what's it worth?"

G: Did you sense that perhaps the White House was getting pressure to jettison, say, or to include the governor's veto?

Y: Oh, yes. Oh, I knew it. I mean no question of sensing it, I mean, sure, they were getting beat on.

G: We'll go into this in some detail in the legislative part of it. Was communication with the White House fairly frequent?

Y: Yes, I would say it was continuous.

G: And did the White House have any input in the day-to-day decisions of the task force?

Y: Well, they did because there was a constant dialogue: Shriver-Moyers, some Shriver-Johnson, Yarmolinsky-Moyers, Yarmolinsky-Redmon. I don't think there was White House dialogue. There may have been other people who were talking to people in the White House. That was too early I think for us to be talking to Larry O'Brien.

G: In Chris Weeks' book [Job Corps, Dollars and Dropouts] on the Job Corps he describes a crisis in communications between the leadership of the task force and the working groups within the task force. This was when Shriver was on the Hill and you were in an automobile accident and out of commission for maybe a month.

Y: I was not out of commission for a month. I mean, as soon as I was taken from Arlington County Hospital to Walter Reed and possibly before, I was having people come to the hospital suite and running things from the hospital bed as much as possible. I don't doubt that people were--I mean here the Director and the Deputy Director, the Director was on the Hill all the time and the Deputy Director wasn't there, but I think the interval was shorter and I suspect that the effects were not as serious.

Well, now I told you how the massive job proposal was rejected, the why and how.

"What consideration did the task force give to the income maintenance approach?" Oh, we rejected it from the start primarily because the whole thing was you've got to get people out of poverty. "It's not a handout, but a hand up," and the whole notion if you're going to sell this you've got to sell it as consistent with American ideals.

G: Was this basically in terms of political acceptance rather than what would work the best in terms of alleviating poverty?

Y: I think the analogy is the AID formula: you give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; you teach him how to fish and he can feed himself from then on.

G: Was the War on Poverty planned with the recognition that Sargent Shriver would be the head of the program?

Y: Not necessarily. I think we kind of assumed it, but I don't think it would make a difference. It would have to be somebody who had to a high degree the abilities that Shriver had.

G: Do you think that Congress supported components of the legislation that they otherwise might not have been inclined to support had they not known that Shriver was going to implement it?

Y: I don't know.

G: In 1964 before the committee he seems to have had an enormous amount of congressional good will.

Y: He did. Tremendous. And at that point I think they must have assumed that he would run it, but I don't remember that specifically.

Now we talked about these questions on the decision to put OEO in the Executive Office of the President, cabinet-level department, and RFK, we covered those questions I think already. And the one about the 1964 presidential election we did last time.

"Was there a fear at the White House that an anti-poverty program would alienate the middle class?" No, I don't think so. I think the idea of class war, I think we really didn't [consider it]. We figured that we were helping people to move into the middle class. We were not making it easier for people to be poor, we were making it possible for people not to be poor, that's the way we saw it.

G: The program seems to have embodied a concept of attacking poverty through a unified approach by attacking all of its causes simultaneously. Do you recall the origin of that, if this in fact was [true]?

Y: I don't think we thought of it that way, I think it was just sort of what do you do about poverty? Well, it's a phenomenon; you've got to get at the roots of the phenomenon. I don't think anybody said should you just get at one root at a time.

G: I know that when Shriver testified he said that this program is designed to attack all of these different things, and if you reject one component of the program you'll harm the whole thing.

Y: That was defensive of the program. But I don't think that we considered as a policy alternative, first you solve the health problem and then you solve the welfare problem and then. . . . No.

G: What was the origin of the Community Action Program?

Y: It came up through Grey Areas, Lloyd Ohlin's approach to juvenile [delinquency], Ohlin and [Richard] Cloward, HARYOU [Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited], all those.

G: Were you all aware of all of these antecedents?

Y: Most of us were pretty much aware of them. I had known them because I had done some work with the Ford Foundation when I had been a foundation consultant in the late fifties. They were sort of part of our intellectual heritage. But unlike the Justice Department-juvenile delinquency group, we were not intimately involved with them. I remember very early on reading an account by a French journalist--this is a kind of a deja vu--who met me at a dinner party in Washington, and I had just gone over to the poverty program. I just told him that now I had to learn all about poverty and it was very interesting. So "here's a new problem," was somewhat the approach, although again, it wasn't a wholly new problem to me and not to most of the people who were working on it.

G: Did you all on the task force discuss these various programs in terms of Community Action--these antecedents?

Y: Not systematically.

G: Really?

Y: No. It was a very informal process. I don't want to say it was a bull session, but the discussion would go on usually until somebody like me would say, "Well now, who's going to do what to whom? All right, so we've identified issues in the course of our rather rambling discussion. Let's put them on the blackboard and let's decide who's

going to work on them." Rather than starting out to say, "Here's an agenda of what we're going to talk about. We're going to talk about this for fifteen minutes." Nobody did that.

G: Was Community Action based on the proposition that the existing social programs had not been relevant to the poor and that they had lacked control over the programs? Is this something you sought to change?

Y: Yes, rather than control over I would say input to. I can't remember at what point one of us made a distinction which I used later on: there are lots of things that the doctor knows better than the patient, but there are some things that the patient knows better than the doctor, like where it hurts. I don't think we took the position that the patient knows better than the doctor, period.

G: Was Community Action designed to work under the aegis of local government?

Y: It was, and it never occurred to us that--it was a real blind area--local government would get into a big fight with the community. As I said yesterday, we thought the fight would be between the traditional charitable organizations on the one hand and the local government and the poor on the other hand. It was recognized that CAP could be used to bypass some local power structures, but that was primarily in the context of black and white, that you would have to have ways to protect the rights of poor minorities.

G: Was this largely seen in terms of the South, say, where minorities might--?

Y: Yes. Yes, it was thought of as the South. We weren't thinking about the black ghettoes of the North.

G: To what extent was Community Action devised as a means of providing options for local communities to select their own programs?

Y: I think the emphasis on that idea came a little later. I don't remember that as being an early idea. It's an obvious idea, but I think it didn't come into vogue until a little later on.

G: So it sounds to me that what you're saying is that Community Action was seen as something that had come out of the poverty experience, the antecedents of the Grey Areas, et cetera. This is the way to fight poverty, rather than this is the way to overturn city hall. That seems to be from what you say here the most important reason.

Y: It was not thought of as the way to fight city hall, no, not at all.

G: Do you recall the origin of the term maximum feasible participation?

Y: Well, that's my story about Dick Boone using it, and I don't know where he got it. I think you ought to ask him. My conception of what it meant was that you involved poor people in the process, not that you put them in charge. It was partly a means of insuring black participation in the South, that was one of its [elements].

You asked about Saul Alinsky's views of community organization. We were aware of them. I think we thought they were the notion of using conflict. I think we were a little too much a bunch of do-gooders to be really attracted to those ideas. Our discussion of the implications of participation of the poor did not assume the kind of confrontations that later developed. We didn't really talk about [that].

G: Do you think that the task force was relatively united in this feeling, or was there a consensus here, or do you think that possibly some may have favored this view while others did not.

Y: It is quite possible that some may have favored the view and it didn't come through to me because I may not have been sensitive enough to crosscurrents of opinion. After all, I had come out of the Pentagon where I had been for the last three or four years, where, for all the talk about whiz kids and so forth, it was a pretty authoritarian intellectual atmosphere. That word sounds wrong, and it is wrong. It wasn't that it was authoritarian, but it was more hierarchial, that's what it was. If somebody in authority said this is what he wanted to do, at least at the level I was at in the Pentagon--if people disagreed with [Robert] McNamara they didn't tell me about it. I didn't hear about it unless they wanted McNamara to hear about it. They assumed that talking to me was like telling McNamara. Not that I wouldn't keep their confidences, but that presumably I thought the same way McNamara did, and you don't argue with the people in charge. They would argue with their peers, not with me. And there wasn't a great deal of argument. I mean, there was certainly grumbling in the military, but it wasn't until I went back to the Pentagon that I managed really to get access to some of that in what I hope was a productive way. So when I came to the task force I was not accustomed to an atmosphere where I would tend to seek out and listen for disagreements in the ranks.

G: But surely such diverse people as [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan and Dick Boone--?

Y: Now, well, I mean I knew that we had big, big troubles with the departments, but I'm talking about within the ranks of the people on the task force who were not there as representatives of their departments, and that was most of the people on the task force. I knew that Moynihan had a problem, and I knew that Bill Wirtz was impossible to deal with, and I knew that I couldn't persuade the OMB to let us put the OEO in the Executive Office of the President, that that would be a power struggle that we'd have to win. But that's different.

Now you say it had been suggested that Shriver was at first skeptical of Community Action but was persuaded by RFK. I don't think so. I think he agreed that it was a good idea but it was only one idea, and we all agreed that it couldn't be the whole thing. In fact, I think persuaded partly by McNamara, we saw the Job Corps as a big opportunity. It was more practical. It was you're really taking these kids out of a poverty environment, and you're putting them in a wholesome setting where they're going to learn the habits of work. I don't know.

G: Two problems here: one, the cost of transporting them the distance.

Y: Yes. It wasn't just transporting them, but housing them and clothing them and feeding them.

G: And two, wouldn't they just go back to the environment after they finished the program?

Y: Well, we optimistically figured that when they went back, if there were jobs they would be motivated to get them, and once they got the jobs they'd be all right, they'd have made it. Now, why wasn't that so? I suppose partly because there weren't the jobs, and there weren't the jobs above the poverty level. I don't know the answer to that question, and I haven't really looked at a systematic study of what happened to the people who graduated from the Job Corps. It may be that the problem was just the Job Corps was so small, that in fact a sizeable proportion of the graduates made it out of poverty and stayed out.

G: Again, back to Community Action. Do you think that the Peace Corps experience lended itself to Community Action, the fact that it seemed to be going on abroad?

Y: Yes, that's right. Because a lot of what the Peace Corps volunteers did was to activate communities to deal with their own problems. I think that was almost the classic pattern of what an AB generalist who went into the Peace Corps was supposed to do.

G: Did you in your own mind foresee, in terms of participation, a formula of say one-third, one-third and one-third participation: one-third residents, one-third local government, and one-third volunteer groups or social groups?

Y: No. No. No. I think if anything we assumed that--what did we assume?--a Community Action organization would have some participant . . . I don't know, I guess I'm really spinning theories here [about] what we assumed. I can't remember if indeed we zeroed in on the

question of what the proportions would be. Certainly local government would be involved, we assumed that. I'm reasonably sure that we underplayed the role of the community because at least my own bias and I think other people's biases, maybe just my own, was towards the direction of any enterprise by the full-time professionals who were hired to do it. And sure, you had a board, but people who know how to run it run it. I realize that that's rather unrealistic in the Community Action setting, but I don't know that I realized it at the time.

G: Do you recall who in particular worked on the formulation of Community Action?

Y: I think it was probably the junior staff people like Anne Oppenheimer Hamilton and Chris Weeks. I notice you list Richard Boone. Richard Boone I'm sure worked on it. Dave Hackett, I don't remember Dave Hackett working on it. Bill Capron probably worked on other things. Harold Horowitz worked as a lawyer and I don't remember what part he worked on, you'll have to ask him. Fred Hayes I don't think was around at that time, I think he came in later. Jack Conway, when he came in--did he run Community Action first? Yes. I mean, yes, Jack Conway knew about Community Action because he had been a labor union leader, and we sort of turned it over to him. Lloyd Ohlin didn't work on it, because again, Lloyd Ohlin is an academician not programmatically inclined, so he had very little impact. And it isn't that those people were excluded, they just sort of drifted away.

G: Here's a question out of your article, "The Beginnings of OEO," the power potential of the--

Y: The power potential was largely overlooked, it really was, yes.

G: That's what it was.

Y: "Did the task force consider the issues of whether the poor should actually control the Community Action Agency?" No. I don't think it occurred to us that they would actually control it. After all, this was the early sixties, not the late sixties and the seventies, big transformation. And just the whole notion that--I don't think we'd ever heard of a commune, except the Paris commune of 1870.

G: The White House view of Community Action, do you [have any insights here]?

Y: Well, you remember that we discovered after the bill had gone through that Lyndon Johnson thought it was like the NYA, it was all going to be run by local government. Bill Moyers knew differently. Who else in the White House cared? I don't know, Larry O'Brien? Larry cared about issues but I never knew how much he got into them. He was there to count the votes and his concern was there, but how much his interest was there I never knew.

G: In The Vantage Point Johnson asserted that he perceived Community Action as a means of shaking up existing institutions and that local governments had to be challenged to be awakened. Did he ever make this point with you?

Y: I don't remember his making it, but then, I mean even the illustration that we used of a local person protesting the midnight raids, that is

shaking up the local organization. It's all right to shake it up, but it didn't occur to us that the shaking up might extend to the point of turning it over.

G: This is a welfare recipient protesting the social worker's raid?

Y: Right. And you get somebody who lives in the community who complains to the social worker, who is an official delegate from the Community Action organization.

G: On questioning you mentioned that the White House asked, for example, how important was the governor's veto, or presumably, could you live with governor's veto on CAP? Well, they must have gotten some indication from these exchanges what Community Action meant. If you didn't want the governors to veto it, it meant there was some power potential there.

Y: Yes, but how much power? Again, you speak of the White House as they. You know, the White House is not a black box or a white box. It was Bill Moyers who had a political problem. Now, Bill Moyers was also responsible for the message, and he was thinking about the whole thing and thinking about it in statesmanlike terms. I would be interested to go back and look at the message. You don't have the message here, do you?

G: I think I do. I'll check and see, I may have it in my file.

Did John Kenneth Galbraith work on the message?

Tape 2 of 2

Y: --particularly with a new and controversial piece of legislation, you want to get it in while you've still got a little clout.

G: We were talking about the special message, and John Kenneth Galbraith's role in drafting it.

Y: I have a vague notion that he was one of the people who was asked to put in some eloquence, but that could be just because it sounds as if he would have been. He would be the best source on that.

G: Did he play a role in the task force?

Y: I don't recall his coming to any of the task force meetings. Was he in India at the time?

G: I don't think so. I see memos from him during this period.

Y: Yes, yes.

G: Now you had the issue of family planning. I may have shown you some correspondence dealing with how to handle the hot potato of family planning, birth control.

Y: No, you didn't show me that.

G: Did I?

Y: Yes, I had forgotten that that was an issue that long ago.

G: You were getting some mail on that. You wrote the White House and said, "How do we handle this? We're getting some inquiries."

Y: Let me see, I'm curious.

G: I may not have it in this. There it is.

Y: Oh, oh, yes. Oh, I see, yes. But this was about being swamped with correspondence. You did show me this.

G: You said it was loaded with dynamite.

Y: Now wait a minute.

G: The population control [issue].

Y: No. This is Bill Hopkins saying to Moyers, "The attached memorandum which I received from Mr. Yarmolinsky last month and my response are self-explanatory." That is where he said that we'll stop dumping all the correspondence that relates to poverty. This was a typical thing for me to do. I said, "Please don't send all this correspondence to us because we don't have the staff to answer it. Refer it to the departments. But since we want to make something of the poverty program put a notation on it that the White House requests the letter be answered and that it be referenced to poverty whenever appropriate." The point of the memorandum is "I would appreciate it if this mail can be diverted immediately as the amount coming in here is really unmanageable." It says "Original sent to Mr. Moyers by--" some initials. I always wanted to deal at the lowest manageable level, and this went to Hopkins, not to Moyers you see. Then Hopkins writes back and says, "We're doing it. They're doing both of the things that you asked for." Then Hopkins writes to Moyers and says, "Since then we have been getting a lot of letters on population control as part of the War on Poverty--three hundred and fifty letters. This is a subject loaded with dynamite. I'd be inclined to shoot them to HEW, but we don't think they know how to handle them. Shouldn't they submit a draft for approval here before they do?" So I didn't get into that. I don't remember

that issue. And I think my reaction would be "Don't brush it off on us, we've got enough to worry about."

G: Now I have an indication that there was an urban affairs task force set up within the War on Poverty Task Force that would focus mainly on Community Action. Do you recall that? Is this accurate?

Y: No, and it doesn't make sense. I mean, it seems to me unlikely because the task force was organized to the extent it was around the major divisions of the legislation which would also be the major administrative divisions of the agency. Early on it came out that there was one person in charge of Community Action, one person in charge of Job Corps, one person in charge of Neighborhood Youth Corps, and I forget what the other things--the Inter-Agency Coordination, and they corresponded to the titles of the act and the eventual assistant directors of the agency.

G: Moynihan in his book [Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding] asserts that after the legislation was submitted then the original task force members returned to the various departments, and the most forceful and radical advocates of Community Action gathered to preside over a radicalization of that Community Action structure.

Y: Well, first place, his charge refers to a period long after I was gone, as to which--

G: Well no, he's saying after March. The legislation was submitted in March, and you stayed through August.

Y: That's right. Well, if he's talking about that period, I think he's just plain wrong. I think it's just made up out of--and who were these radical people?

G: Well, the ones he names: Hackett, Boone, [Sanford] Kravitz, Hayes, [Harold] Horowitz, [Eric] Tolmach and Conway.

Y: By that time Conway was running things, and he's not a turn-out-the-lights-and-start-throwing-bottles man, he never was. No, I think that charge is just not true.

G: You don't think that the people who planned Community Action distorted the task force's original conceptualization of it?

Y: No. No, I really don't. The person to ask to get the most unbiased, worm's eye view of that would be Jack Wofford, because he was there and he's very perceptive and thoroughly objective and unbiased, a middle-of-the-roader.

G: Did the task force take into account the normal tendency of federal programs to spread themselves very thinly? You know, so more congressmen can get programs.

Y: Oh, yes. I mean, we realized we had to. That was why we said you can't have Community Action limited to a few areas, you've got to spread it around.

G: Do you think that that watered down the program more than it should have?

Y: Well, it watered it down more than it should have in an ideal world, but that was just a fact of life. Maybe it watered it down but it also meant you'd get more money.

G: Or does it just mean that less money has to go farther?

Y: No, because you get a little more money because you'd get more interest.

G: Who coined the name Job Corps, do you remember?

Y: No. No. We did a lot of brainstorming about words and phrases.

G: I think we talked about the role of the Defense Department there yesterday.

Y: Yes.

G: Was there a choice made in terms of which kids would you reach, the Job Corps? Would you reach those that were out of money and out of a job and out of school, or would you go down a lower level and try to get kids that were really culturally deprived even though your failure rate might be much higher?

Y: No, I know we discussed that question, and I wish I could remember where we came out, if we came out on it. I don't remember whether the concept of creaming was something we talked about then or a word that I've learned since then. Do you know what creaming is?

G: No.

Y: It's a characteristic of any social program in which you take the people you can do the most with, but who need it the least. You take the cream off the top. Although we didn't use the word, but I'll tell you the extent--and now. One of our objections to using USES to recruit for the Job Corps was we figured they would cream. I don't know whether we used that word at the time. But they had over the years and decades become adept at finding jobs for middle-class people who were the ones who needed them least, and not good at all at finding jobs

for poor people who needed them most. And that if they did the recruiting for the Job Corps they would give us nice middle-class kids who really weren't the ones who needed it. But whether we were reaching down below the run-of-the-mill poverty person to the real poorest of the poor, I can't tell you whether we thought that's what we're going to do.

G: Did the task force think that the Employment Service would do an adequate job of recruiting?

Y: No. That's why we insisted on having our own recruiting service, and as you said, there was a compromise in which they did some.

G: There was one proposal at this point to lower the draft examination age to seventeen so they could sort of predetermine who was going to flunk so that you could target these [people].

Y: Yes, I remember it. Now that you mention it I remember that proposal so that you could say to the kids, "You ought to join the Job Corps, we'll send you to a doctor. Maybe you want to join the Job Corps or go back to some part-time schooling" or whatever. I don't know what happened to that idea. I can't remember in what context it came up. But now that you mention it I remember the idea. It was a good idea.

G: Do you recall how the decision was made that OEO rather than the Labor Department would operate the Job Corps?

Y: Did they want the Job Corps? I mean, did they make a play for it?

G: I gather they wanted all manpower programs.

Y: All I can remember is kind of a vague emotional reaction at the time. I know I would have reacted that they would mess it up, and therefore

we said no, you can't have it. I don't remember their making a big play for it. It seemed to me the compromise was arrived at early on that they could have the Neighborhood Youth Corps and we'd run the Job Corps. I don't remember the suggestion that they run the Job Corps. There was a question how much the military would do and how much the conservation camps would be run by Interior and Agriculture.

G: Wasn't there a pretty highly developed lobbying effort on behalf of the conservationist groups to get more--?

Y: Well, whether it was highly developed by them or whether we developed it in order to get their votes for OEO, I can't tell you. Again, that would be Shriver who could tell you that.

G: How about Edith Green and the Job Corps?

Y: We talked a little about her last time. I don't know that I can add anything there.

G: I noticed that no women's Job Corps camps were scheduled with the legislation was submitted, and almost immediately on that first day of hearings when she raised it, that you all retreated to include women's Job Corps camps. Do you recall how that decision was made? Was that just a necessary price to get her vote?

Y: I think it was a necessary price. The simple answer is I don't recall. As I guess I said yesterday, our consciousnesses were not raised on the women's issue at all at that point. I don't mean to say that we were all male chauvinist pigs, we even had women on the task force and they were pretty sensible women. Anne Oppenheimer [Hamilton] is not about to be pushed around. She's not exactly a crinoline type as

you observed when you talked to her today. But I don't remember seeing this as a big issue. Then when it was a political issue I think our reaction was sure.

Well, now wait a minute. I wonder if our reaction was not--now I'm speculating, not recalling--that the big poverty problem in the sense of the problem of preparing people for work, it was to prepare boys and not girls, because girls seem to get jobs, and the problem is the boys don't get jobs and they're not equipped to get jobs. I wonder if on that basis we didn't say that we really don't need very many girls' camps. There ought to be a nominal number of girls. Then we had this stuff from Edith Green and we retreated. I think that's what happened, but I'm not sure.

G: I gather that education, pre-school education, the whole concept of Head Start was discussed during the task force meetings, but--

Y: Not under that name.

G: --it never came out.

Y: Well, no. Lee Schorr can tell you when that started. My ex-wife worked for Head Start when it started after I was out of the thing.

G: With the formulation of the--?

Y: Well, she got into it quite early. She still works in the field. I don't know how much she would remember about it. I think there are people who were more involved in the early stages and Lee is the ideal person, really.

G: To what extent was pre-school development considered, do you recall?

Y: I think it was one of the pieces, but that's one of those things that I can't remember when it came in and whether it was in early or whether it came in later. I just think of it. Was it in the congressional presentation?

G: I don't think so. Of course, it came later as part of Community Action.

Y: See, the thing we were drafting was not a message to the President but the presentation.

G: Yes, his message to Congress accompanying the legislation.

Y: Yes. But the presentation went along with it. We were told by some of the committee members that the presentation was awfully thin. They were used to getting more documentation with a piece of legislation and only because this was so important was it being rushed through, that they were willing to accept it. I thought it was pretty complete. But then I had not drafted presentations before and I wasn't familiar with presentations outside the military presentations, which of course are completely different.

G: Do you think that congressmen read over these or did their staffs digest them?

Y: Staffs I guess did.

G: Someone made the comment that if Congress had known what Community Action was all about they never would have passed it.

Y: Well, if they had thought about it, but I don't think they really thought about it. You know, congressmen don't think very much. Some few do.

G: Well, they did ask a lot of questions about the program in the hearings.

Y: Yes, but either the Republicans were asking questions--this is straight political shooting holes in it--or the questions that the Democrats asked were the questions we supplied them. So either way you weren't getting much constructive thought. I mean, we had to do all the [work]. I wonder how much things have changed. I should know and I really don't because I haven't been that intimately involved. Whether nowadays, because they have these huge numbers of staff people, I think they do a lot more of their own work and they don't depend on the executive branch. But it was just taken for granted that we would do all the work on that.

G: But what you're saying here is that if they'd really thought about Community Action they wouldn't have passed it.

Y: No, no, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying they didn't think about it particularly. No, I think even if they had thought about it--

G: They would have?

Y: --they would have. I don't know that they would have seen the pitfalls, and if they had they would have said, well, it might work.

G: One explanation is that the people in Congress, the members and staff members, who were really keenly attuned to these sorts of social programs were so hungry for anything to pass such as this that they didn't really scrutinize the [legislation].

Y: Yes. Why would they--suppose they had scrutinized it, what would they have wanted instead? I think that's a real question. Why wouldn't they have wanted this rather than something else?

G: Do you recall how the adult education provision was added?

Y: Remind me of the specific adult education provision.

G: Yes. Wasn't that Title II?

Y: Adult education. Do you have that sheet?

G: Yes. Or maybe that was part of Title I.

Y: Title I was Job Corps and Title II was Community Action, or Title II was Community Action, Title III was Job Corps. It's in my article.

G: I have a copy of the bill, I'll get it out.

Y: I can't remember what the adult education thing was.

(Interruption)

I think that adult education program was just an anti-illiteracy program.

G: Now the Work Study Program was administered by HEW, but the OEO director retained the responsibility of general coordination.

Y: Yes. This coordination responsibility was never worked out in practice, and that was what I expected to work on very hard in the early stages of the actual program, and there wasn't time to work it out before the bill went into effect, became law.

G: Would the same hold true of Neighborhood Youth Corps?

Y: Sure, sure. Bill Wirtz said, "If you try to tell us how to run that program," well, I figured let him talk that way now and we'll figure out something.

G: Did the Peace Corps at all fear competition from VISTA?

Y: I have no recollection of that. I think I would remember it.

G: Was Shriver at all reluctant to support VISTA because the National Service Corps concept had been defeated?

Y: No. No, that was one of his big things, that he was going to put through something that Hubert Humphrey couldn't put through.

What's the PCJD?

G: That's the President's Commission on Juvenile Delinquency.

Y: "Did they have a role in planning the"--wait a minute--"the National Service Corps?" By the National Service Corps you mean VISTA?

G: Yes.

Y: No. Well, I can't remember. They existed, didn't they? They must have had some funding, so they must have played some role. But we kept saying we were going to make it more a local venture. I don't know how much more local venture we really did make it. But we had to say that we were changing it from their design in order to sell it. So there was a little--

G: Well now, by this time surely you must have seen the impact of the Peace Corps on the Peace Corps volunteers that were sent abroad. Did you also consider the impact of the VISTA experience on the middle-class [volunteers]?

Y: Yes, we thought it would be great, sure.

G: Again, did you intend for the volunteers to do community organization work rather than, say, case work?

Y: I think so, yes. Yes, but we didn't think of community organization work as being all that revolutionary. We just thought of it as being more sensible and more productive.

G: Anything on the President's trip to Appalachia during this period? Shriver was going to go along and then didn't go.

Y: No, I think that was real gimmickry.

G: Shriver ended up visiting Chicago and meeting with Mayor [Richard] Daley, right after--

Y: Chicago was his old stamping ground, of course.

G: And Louisville and met with [Orval] Faubus in Little Rock. This was right after the legislation was submitted. Do you recall that?

Y: No, I don't, but I'm sure he felt the need to touch base with his initial political support.

G: Daley testified on the Hill. In the hearings you have the impression that the task force people and Sargent Shriver intended for the legislation to be implemented one way, and Mayor Daley had a completely different interpretation of how it would work in Chicago.

Y: It wouldn't surprise me.

G: Do you recall anything on dealing with Daley during this period?

Y: I don't. I think that's something Shriver would have handled personally, as he was the ideal person to do it.

G: Howard Smith--Judge Smith--held up the granting of a rule for about six weeks.

Y: Yes.

G: Do you recall how he was--

Y: How he was persuaded to [grant it]?

G: Well, I gather you got the other people to vote. He never did vote for it, did he, or did he?

Y: No, I think we did get the votes. Again, that was something that Shriver really worked on.

G: I was going to ask you about the selection of a sponsor. Phil Landrum sponsored it in the House.

Y: Yes, right.

G: Who got Landrum to do that?

Y: Shriver did.

G: Did he really?

Y: Hell, yes.

G: Some reports have said that Johnson got Landrum to do it.

Y: Well, I had always understood that Shriver did but Shriver would tell you.

G: What about Senate sponsor?

Y: Well, it was [Pat] McNamara, wasn't it? You wanted to have one old-fashioned liberal and one old-fashioned conservative.

G: Was Lister Hill approached first though, do you know, to sponsor it in the Senate?

Y: I don't recall. It could have been, I just don't recall.

G: Now, the Democrats threatened a pretty drastic revision of Community Action in the caucus and threatened to convert it to making piecemeal grants to individual community organizations without the coordinating apparatus. Do you recall that at all? Shriver headed it off I gather.

Y: Boy, my memory. I don't remember that. I don't.

G: Of course, the [Winston L.] Prouty Amendment would have given the governors the right to veto Community Action. It was a very close vote. Goldwater voted to abstain on that.

Y: Why?

G: Did you have any inside knowledge as to why he did? Why he didn't vote?

Y: No. I wouldn't have remembered that he did. He wasn't paired?

G: No, evidently not.

I guess at this point we ought to talk about how you were more or less barred from the program. From your perspective do you recall having any indication that there was opposition to you in the Congress?

Y: Only the most vague, I think a little something from Wilson McCarthy that I may not even have recognized until after the event.

G: And how were you told?

Y: That is all in that oral history [Interview I] that you have. Shriver came in in the end of the day--I had no idea that it had been going on or anything--he said, "Well, we just threw you to the wolves and this is the worst day in my life."

G: Landrum announced on the floor that he had it from the highest authority that you [would not be part of the program].

Y: Yes, yes. That came up the next day or two days later, I forget.

G: I wonder to what extent it boiled down to a question of having made a commitment to an individual for a position before the legislation was passed, rather than simply personalities and one thing and another.

Y: How do you mean, boiled down to?

G: Well, the notion that you had already been designated as deputy director for the program before the legislation was passed. Do you think this was at all a factor?

Y: Well, no, because I don't think they had any reason to know that. All they knew was that I was acting as deputy and Shriver was acting

as director, and the assumption I suppose was that the two of us would be appointed respectively to those two positions.

G: Do you think that the program would have been different if you had stayed on and filled the slot of deputy director?

Y: Well, I think it would have suffered so from level funding, from the fact that it wouldn't have gotten the funding that it needed to grow, that it might have had all its problems or essentially all its problems anyway.

G: What about just having someone to fill the spot though, the fact that there was no deputy director for a good while?

Y: Well, it's hard to say how much difference that can make. It goes to efficiency and neatness and that sort of thing; how much it goes to the fundamental success. . . .

G: Do you think that Shriver would have relied on you where he was not able to delegate to subsequent deputies?

Y: Well, I think so. I guess the reason I think so is that the thing that really moved me to take the job of deputy in the task force was that he had been pressing me to take it and I had been saying "I've got to stick with Defense." The question of I'd be giving up a permanent job--not a permanent, but a job that would last for the administration--for a temporary task force assignment. I had said I would not give up my job in the Pentagon unless I was appointed a deputy special assistant to the President. The deal was that I would be, and then that afternoon Moyers came around and said, well, after the President said he would do it and it was all announced, the President

said no, he would prefer to have me just be the deputy head of the task force, but the day the bill was signed he would appoint me.

Anyway, the thing that lead me to say yes when Shriver asked me was that, when I said to him, "You can find other people who know more about this subject than I do," he said, "Yes, but I trust you." That was just so disarming that. . . .

G: Were many of the people involved in the task force people who Shriver trusted rather than people who--

Y: Well, the people who were there early on, I mean people like Harris Wofford, who is very close to Shriver, and Frank Mankiewicz, and the Peace Corps people he had known, or friends he had known in earlier incarnations who came in to help as volunteers. Shriver is not close to very many people.

G: The other suggestion regarding what might have been has been that you would have kept components like Community Action from getting, shall we say, farther away from the realm of responsibility and coinciding with what the White House wanted and what the Congress wanted.

Y: Yes. Well, I hope I would have. On the other hand, how long--well, Jack Conway of course left the job of running Community Action and then he became deputy and then he left the program altogether I guess. I would not say that there's anything that I could do in that line of work that Jack Conway couldn't do as well or better. But if he wasn't there and somebody else came in and there was a succession of people, I just don't know. But this is really an area in which I'm not a good witness.

G: Anything else on the congressional phase? Anything on Adam Clayton Powell as chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee? I gather he ran those hearings with a partisan mean--

Y: Oh, yes. He ran them. Those were the days when the chairman really had the power and he loved to exercise it. He really was quite a character.

G: Did he himself have a consideration in this? Did he want a grant for Harlem?

Y: No, he didn't. The way he operated he didn't need to tell you what he wanted, because when he wanted it he would tell you and he would get it. So he didn't need to tell you in advance. This was when he was still at the height of his powers.

G: Anything else on Shriver working the Hill?

Y: Well, he got along with just this whole extraordinary range of people. He was so skillful at talking to them and listening to them.

G: Moynihan makes the point that Congress failed to support comprehensive planning, and that that hurt the program because if it had had more money and more time to plan that the program would have been better thought out. But this was a provision that Congress cut out presumably because there were too many programs for an Edith Green that were just on the drawing boards and were not actually being set up.

Y: Was this money for planning that he's talking about?

G: Yes.

Y: I don't recall.

G: Comprehensive planning.

Y: I'm not much for comprehensive planning myself, so I can't be very sympathetic. I mean, I think that the planning grows out of the action. It's a question of the quality of the people you have, and sure, you have to put together a five-year plan, and one of the things that I made a big thing of when I was putting together the organization was that the budgeteers would work for the program planners, and the program planners would have the same kind of five-year rolling projections that we put into the Defense Department.

G: In retrospect, would you have favored a program that merely coordinated and did not operate at all?

Y: No. Because it's like being a scientist, you've got to have some hands-on experience in order to be able to coordinate effectively. And you know, coordination is a sometime thing anyway. The only person who can really coordinate is the president. If you had a special assistant to the president for poverty problems, you see, he's got no constituency, really. If you're a special assistant, if you're on the White House staff, you cannot really dictate how the departments and the agencies spend their money, what they spend their money on. You're kind of snipping and snapping at the edges of the budgetary process, and those programs, you've got to have a substantial thing that you're running, and then maybe you can do some coordinating along the way. You've got to have something to deal with, you've got to have some cards to deal with.

G: In retrospect, if you were planning the War on Poverty from the period of sixteen years' hindsight, what would you have done differently?

Y: I would have called off the war in Vietnam. That's number one.

G: Number two?

Y: Well, I would not have been as sanguine about finding jobs for the people who were prepared for the jobs. There are impersonal forces in our society that's making it harder and harder for people from low income backgrounds with poor education and poor work orientation to find decent work, unlike the previous eras when successive generations of immigrants were able to pull themselves out of that condition. I don't think it's the fact that these people have black skins. I think it's more the nature of the economy. You find pockets of that kind of thing among white populations but only--Appalachia, I suppose. You find it in South Boston. There is a kind of circle and it's harder and harder for them to break out of it. Now we've got the inflation-unemployment inverse relationship, which makes it harder still. I won't say I'm pessimistic, but I guess I am because if I were in complete charge I don't know what I'd do. I think there may be some sophisticated economic things that people like Jim Tobin have thought of that could get inflation in hand without having unemployment go up and therefore making this structural unemployment harder to break out of. But whether you could get the Congress to go along with that kind of thing?

Also, I think that we didn't see the problem as clearly as--I mean where is the poverty problem today? I think its northeastern central cities. I don't think it exists particularly in urban Texas, does it?

G: Certainly to some extent. Now here a difference of degree is a difference in kind, I suppose.

Y: Yes, it is. If you can get the problem down to a reasonable number then you can deal with it. But when it gets up above a certain percentage the things that you can do with small numbers of people you can't do with these people. I certainly think that a welfare system that did not put a premium on not working, or that didn't put a 50 per cent tax rate on working, but you do that and you've got to stretch out the welfare system so far that you take in too large a proportion of the population. Then what is the effect of those consequent tax rates on--I don't really buy most of this stuff about how high tax rates discourage incentive for the middle classes, but they sure do distort the economy. I mean, you see people doing all kinds of strange things and companies doing all kinds of strange things for tax reasons that are not good for productivity. I sometimes think that the best thing you could do for the poor would be to give corporate executives lifetime employment so they could plan beyond the next quarterly earnings report. You follow my [thinking]?

G: Well, anything else that we've left out?

Y: Probably is, but it doesn't come immediately to mind.

G: Maybe we can talk about it before we pursue the Dominican Republic.

Y: All right.

G: Thank you very much.

Y: You're welcome.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview III]

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