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DOUGLASS CATER ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW I

PREFERRED CITATION

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By Douglass Cater
to the
Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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Signed by Douglass Cater on August 27, 1971

Accepted by James B. Rhoads, Archivist of the United States on January 25, 1972

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ACCESSION NUMBER 72-19

Douglass Cater Biographical Information

Educator, writer, editor.
B. Montgomery, Ala., 8/24/23. Grad. Phillip Exeter Acad. 1942; A.B., Harvard, 1947, M.A., 1948. Washington editor Reporter mag., 1950-63, nat. affairs editor, 1963-64; spl. asst. to Pres. Johnson, 1964-68; spl. asst. to sec. army, 1951; prof. pub. affairs Princeton, 1959; vis. prof. pub. affairs Wesleyan U., Middletown, Conn., 1963; Regent prof. U. Cal. at San Francisco, 1971-72; pres. Washington College, Chestertown, Md., 1982-90. Adviser on domestic matters, Hubert Humphrey Presdl. Campaign, fall 1968. Guggenheim fellow, 1955; Eisenhower exchange fellow, 1957. Author: The Fourth Branch of Government, 1959; Power in Washington, 1964.
Deceased, September 15, 1995.

INTERVIEWEE: DOUGLASS CATER (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

April 29, 1969

M: Let me identify the tape first of all. This is an interview with Douglass Cater. I'm in his office in Brookings Institution. The date is April 29, and my name is David McComb.

We might start off with a few brief comments about your background. And to start at the beginning, where were you born, when, where did you get your education?

C: Okay. I can give you a vita, but I was born on August 24, 1923, in Montgomery, Alabama, educated at the public schools of Montgomery, the Barnes School for Boys, went from there to Phillips Exeter in New Hampshire, got my undergraduate at Harvard, served two years during the war in the OSS, went back and finished my undergraduate and got a master's degree at Harvard and joined--

M: That was 1948 by that time?

C: Yes. Joined, in the fall of '48, the staff that was planning a new magazine which subsequently in '49 was The Reporter magazine. Sent in 1950 to Washington as the Washington editor of The Reporter and served in that capacity with some leaves of absence for brief service periods in government up until 1962.

Well, I took a year's leave of absence and went up to Wesleyan University as a Fellow. After that I became national affairs editor of The Reporter and remained at Wesleyan as visiting professor and associate director for the Center for Advanced Studies at Wesleyan. It was there that I was in residence when I was invited to join the President in the spring of 1964.

M: You worked for The Reporter beyond the editing work. Was that actual reporting?

C: Yes.

M: Did you actually go to a press conference and things of that nature?

C: Yes, I had during my Washington years the whole of Washington as well as political stories outside Washington as my bailiwick, so I didn't have any fixed routine. But I was both responsible for doing continued reporting myself and for getting contributions from other people.

M: Did you meet Lyndon Johnson in the process of this?

C: Yes. I first became aware of Lyndon Johnson when he became Democratic leader in the

Senate in 1952, he became majority leader in 1954. I remember I did a story about him in The Reporter. Wait just a minute, I've got a chronology of those dates. On January 20, 1953, I wrote a story "Lyndon Johnson, Rising Democratic Star."

M: Did you interview him for that article?

C: I interviewed him briefly, I didn't have any extensive one for that. However, I did do other stories about him and about Congress. Quite a number of my stories were connected with Congress. So I got to know him fairly casually in those years.

In 1955, when he had his heart attack, he was recuperating down on the ranch in Texas and a story appeared in the New York Times, written interestingly enough by William S. White, which said that he was busily at work building a centrist coalition with which he hoped to come back to Washington and run things. The way the story was written it sounded as if it was more than centrist, it was going to be a kind of a southern conservative dominated coalition. Well, this interested me quite a bit and I went down to Austin. George Reedy took me out to the ranch one morning, and I asked then-Senator Johnson about the story and spent the whole day with him and came away much impressed with the man, impressed that he was not by any means going to follow the traditional route of the southern senator, but that he really did have a national vision. And I was all the more impressed with this because at that time he could have no intimation that he would physically ever be able to run for President. He was still in the stage of recuperation where his heart was still causing him some pain, I remember. So I wrote a story out of that experience that appeared in the December 1, 1955, Reporter, called "The Trouble in Lyndon Johnson's Backyard."

Then over the years after that I saw more of him. I was never an intimate.

M: Did he ever get angry with what you wrote about him?

C: No, he always indicated and I received from time to time letters from him, which indicated that he very much appreciated my judgment and my objectivity. He always laid stress on that.

I remember one other story that I wrote that wasn't about him at all, but I was up at a breakfast one morning on the Hill that he gave for George Reedy when George had shot a deer, and they had a deer sausage breakfast and invited several reporters and others. While I was there I gave him a copy of the latest article I had written which was about the Texas Railroad Commission--this was in 1957--at a time when there was an oil crisis. I guess it was after Suez, and I wrote an article called "The General and the Umbrella" which was a story about Ernest Thompson's leadership of the Texas Railroad Commission. He took it and afterwards wrote me a letter, which I prize and still have a copy of, which says something to the effect that "no one can do a better job of summing up a man than

Douglass Cater. No one is more fair and objective." So I was naturally pleased by that assessment.

I guess it was around 1959 or '60 I was appointed for a semester to be the Ferris Visiting Professor at Princeton University in a chair in the Woodrow Wilson School. When the announcement was made, Johnson, who was then still majority leader, got up on the floor and called attention to this appointment and praised Princeton for making it, which was also an indication of his regard for me. I especially appreciated that because Fulton Lewis attacked the appointment on one of his radio programs, saying that Princeton was bringing a "pinko" to teach its students about the affairs of Washington.

M: Did Johnson have favorite reporters? I mean, when he wanted to release something did he just call in a few?

C: I never was engaged in the work with the regular Capitol press corps. I'm sure he had those he relied on more than others, but I just don't have any real insights into that side of his activities. I was a magazine journalist. I only saw him on special occasions. I do know there were times when, for me, he was readily accessible and other times when he was at work on some new strategy when he was not so accessible. Generally, when I saw him--and I never had to see him with any kind of daily urgency--I would submit a request through George Reedy or through Bill Moyers, or Ashton Gonella who was up there, or Mary Margaret, subsequently Valenti, and word would come back that he would see me.

Usually he was very generous. He seemed to enjoy having you in there, and he would conduct his business and talk. On a number of occasions I would spend a long evening up in his office. I only went to his home in Washington once. I've forgotten the exact year, but I remember I dropped by to see him in his office and he said he was having a dinner party that night in honor of Joe Alsop and would my wife and I come. We did go and had a visit in their home. That was probably the only time I'd ever been in his Washington home.

M: You mentioned you were impressed with his national vision, not just a strictly regional politician. Were there any other things about Johnson that you were impressed with in this early period when you were working for The Reporter?

C: First of all, coming from Alabama, I watched many outstanding members of Congress reach a certain height and then level off because of the limitations of their regional commitment. This is true of Lister Hill and John Sparkman and others. I had always regarded it as a tragedy because some of the Southern politicians were among the nation's best. What seemed hopeful and optimistic to me was that Johnson could break through this barrier.

A second thing, of course that very much impressed me, I was watching a

Congress that had really been in the doldrums since the second term of Roosevelt. Whereas it did some outstanding things in foreign affairs during the Truman years it had, since Roosevelt's second term, really not passed any significant domestic legislation. I became impressed that Johnson was a man who was capable of making Congress begin to function, that he had the kind of energy and imagination to know how to make things move in Congress. During those Eisenhower years, I dare say that Congress would have been at a complete standstill if it hadn't been for Johnson.

M: Was he committed to any particular issues, or was he simply a master technician in manipulating Congress?

C: Of course, the cliché was that he was the master consensus builder who really didn't care much about issues. But I found that that cliché was, like all cliches, quite inadequate--that Johnson did not in those years stress the substance of issues because in his speeches on the floor of the Senate or in his dealings with other senators, that would have negated his purpose, which was to reach a rolling consensus. But seeking a consensus was not a negative act for him. It wasn't the lowest common denominator, or what just any old body would agree on. It was trying to find what was the maximum that you could get a majority to support. Generally his ideal of what constituted good public policy corresponded with my own idea, that he was not on the vanguard of liberalism, but he was certainly liberally inclined. And he was not for preserving the status quo. So, although he didn't talk about substance a great deal in his public rhetoric, I felt he understood the substance. He was by no means ignorant of what were the subtleties of the issues he was dealing with.

M: Well, then, how was it that you were more or less drawn into the Johnson orbit? When were you attracted to go to work for him?

C: While he was Vice President--I was up at Wesleyan at that time, but I was down for a party that was held at the Women's Democratic Club. It was a group that, I believe, still meets once a month, and has a dinner and dance. He was there that evening, and he took me aside and asked me if I wouldn't come to work for him, even on a part-time basis.

M: What did he want, a speech writer?

C: It's really rather funny. He said, "Doug, I want you to come 'thank' for me."

And I said, "What's that? Thank?"

And he said, "Thank, T-h-i-n-k! Don't you know the word?" I was honored by it. I think what he mainly wanted was somebody who would be an idea man and a speech drafter. But I went back to Wesleyan and wrote him that I firmly believed that it was not possible for a journalist and a writer, as I was, to be working for anybody else. So I

turned that down. He wrote an understanding note back to me, that he understood very much.

M: You hadn't written any campaign speeches or anything of that nature?

C: No. I had never done anything for him. So, nothing happened there. When he became President--I remember the night of the assassination--I talked to Abe Fortas on the phone. This was before Johnson had gotten back to Washington, and I told Abe that I certainly hoped that all his friends would rally behind him in this desperate time, and that I was prepared to do anything that was needed. I don't know whether that message ever got beyond Fortas or not, except that I was told that my name was submitted to him on several lists of people that ought to be helpful to him. John Kenneth Galbraith had been asked to suggest some names and he'd put me on his list.

I was in touch by phone and in person several times with Bill Moyers and then I was down in, I think it was about February of '64, and was going to have lunch with Moyers and he called and said that the President wanted me to come over and have a swim and have lunch with him. So I went over and at the conclusion of that lunch, as he was going to take a nap, he said, "I want to see you some time. I'd like to have you help me."

M: Did you go swimming, incidentally?

C: Yes, we went swimming in the White House pool.

M: Is it true or false that they wear swimming suits in the White House?

C: No, we didn't have suits. The President, Valenti, Bill Moyers and I paddled around. It was exceedingly hot water, I remember, and it caused me almost to fall asleep at lunch because it was so soporific.

M: He didn't talk business while he was in the swimming pool?

C: Yes. He had just released the poverty message at that time and I remember we discussed that and what some of the problems might be. I remember Bill Moyers paddled up to me and he said, "If you have any questions, go ahead and ask him now." I felt it was rather awkward to interview a man while he was in the swimming pool, but I tried. Later Bill Moyers and I talked a little bit about how I could be of help in the White House, but nothing came of it until suddenly one day I got a phone call from McGeorge Bundy saying that the President wanted me to come down and talk to him about coming onboard in the White House. So I went down the next day, had breakfast with Moyers and Bundy, and they discussed it with me. They seemed rather vague as to what the job was, but--

M: Was it for a White House job?

C: Yes. It was for the White House. In fact, Mac had said it was to be as special assistant to the President. Then that afternoon I expressed a desire to talk to the President about it and I saw him in the late afternoon. And he said two things, as I remember. One, that he wanted me to be his reporter, that he wanted me to keep my eye on all of government and bring the best ideas to him in a way that he could use them. Secondly, he said he wanted me to think ahead, to look down the road.

M: Let me ask you something. What does he mean, "ideas the way he could use them?"

C: Well, he means--

M: You mean specific plans?

C: I understood him to mean that he wanted them put down in a form, not as just vague generalities, but what can a president do to implement the idea; how can he change it from just being a general idea to something--

M: Sounds very practical.

C: Yes. This is in a sense, in retrospect, what a presidential assistant has to develop, a facility for taking things and putting them in a form that a president can use, either in a speech or a legislative proposal or as an executive action. There are all kinds of hooks you put on ideas in order to move them forward. Well, I told him that I was very much challenged by this request and asked overnight to think about it. The next morning I sent word to him that I would do it, as soon as I could complete my seminars--I had several seniors whose course grades depended--their graduation depended--so I had to get that clear, which I did. I think I was able to get down to the White House about May 20, I believe was my starting date.

M: The drive for re-election then had been underway by the time you came to work?

C: Not really in a specific sense, but obviously this was a man who had in a very brief period to take over from an assassinated president, establish a new leadership over government, and then to launch a campaign for his own nomination. So it was a very active period. When I came onboard it was a period when a whole series of commencement speeches had been undertaken and that was the first order of business, getting ready for those.

M: That first year then, the year 1964, did you spend most of your time writing speeches for the President?

C: I would say that was, yes, that was--

M: Commencement and campaign speeches.

C: Right up until after the election. I also did some editing. I saw that Goldwater was flooding the market with various Goldwater books, and there was no Johnson book by him. So we pulled together material from various statements and edited the book My Hope for America, which Random House published. I took on that job too. I also went to the convention and served as a kind of speech editor at the convention to make sure that all the speeches were kept within reasonable length and had a reasonable attractiveness, so that this convention, whose presidential choice was already decided, at least had some public interest in it--excitement.

M: Did you expect the overwhelming victory that came in '64?

C: I think we did, possibly not that big, and certainly the President never let us get very complacent. There was a high pressure atmosphere throughout that campaign. No, I don't think I expected that big a mandate.

M: Now, it has been said in various books, such as The President's Men, that you became an expert on education matters, and later on health, and that this was your area specialization, your specialty--that you handled most of the items in that area. Is that correct?

C: That was probably my greatest continuing responsibility, yes, the HEW area.

M: Did you start to work in the area of education in HEW from the very beginning, or did this slowly evolve?

C: No, I remember in the summer of '64 Bill Moyers and Kermit Gordon and Walter Heller and I had lunch and discussed the idea for setting up a group of task forces that would give some thought to the future. Out of that, oh, I've forgotten the exact number, but the task forces were appointed. I was not liaison at that time to the education or health one.

During the campaign, however, as a result of some conversations I had with several people and as a result of some soundings with the President, I developed the firm conviction that the President ought to make education his top priority item in his campaign. I tried in various speeches, including particularly the one he gave at Denver, to stress this education priority. So in the course of doing that I began to work with Frank Keppel, who was Commissioner of Education, and others. The suggestion, by the way, or suggestions of making education a high priority came from discussions I had at lunch with various people including Oscar Cox, a lawyer here in Washington who has been in and out of government over many years. He has subsequently died. Walter Lippman also felt that education was ripe for presidential initiative.

I had written about the failures in the past. I wrote a story as recently as 1962, I

believe it was, in The Reporter about the failure of the latest higher education act to pass Congress. So I was aware of the long history of education failure.

After the campaign was over, commitments had been made and I was keenly eager to make sure that those commitments were honored. When he came to the preparation of the first messages to Congress, I was assigned the education one. I served as the White House coordinator in preparing the education message. This had grown out of the task force report which had been chaired by John Gardner, then there had been a White House review that included people from HEW and the Budget Bureau and others. So by late December the President had chosen his options on his education program that was to go up. Then it was my job to be the draftsman for the message.

M: Did you find the President receptive to your ideas about education?

C: I found he was very receptive, yes. I would not say "my ideas." He was receptive to ideas which I forwarded for his consideration.

M: So his reputation for interest in this area was genuine.

C: Oh, very genuine, yes. He was in fact always urging me to bigger and bolder ideas in the education field.

M: Well, you must have gotten then right in the middle of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the passage there of.

C: Yes.

M: The books again advance on the idea that the religious issue was central in that. Is that a correct analysis?

C: Yes, well, the Elementary-Secondary Education Act had three major political settlements that had to be worked out. First was the Church-State one.

That had been one of the reasons for blockage in the past, and we went to great lengths to try to take soundings. On this I worked very closely with Frank Keppel, who was extremely able and maintained good contact with some of the parochial church leaders; so that, whereas we didn't lay before them the specifics of the legislation, we posed situations to them and got their responses which led to the titles of the Elementary-Secondary Act.

Then the second political settlement had to be on the matter of the segregation issue. Well, fortunately, that had been cleared away by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 so that it was no longer necessary to have a civil rights proviso written into the education bill

itself.

The third was the fight over formula in which you had to figure out how the education dollar was going to be divided among the regions and states. It was there that the task force recommendation of a poverty impact formula--I don't recall how precisely the task force laid it out, and certainly they did not lay it out in political terms--but the idea that a top priority for federal aid to education should be to go to disadvantaged students--school children--this provided the possibility of developing the Title I formula which managed to survive the political tugs and hauls.

M: Was there any opposition based on the thought that the federal government should not spend money for education?

C: Opposition where?

M: In Congress?

C: Well, yes. Some of the die-hard Republicans, I'm sure, still felt that the federal government ought to stay clear of education altogether. After the mandate of 1964 that kind of direct opposition sort of quieted down. Instead the nature of opposition tended to be, "Well, we're for it, but we're for it in a different way."

M: Did you spend a lot of time on the Hill working on this?

C: Yes.

M: And did this work consist of interviewing congressmen or committees or what?

C: It mainly consisted of dealing with the committee chairman and key members of the subcommittee and the committees. The legislative liaison people in the White House, led by Larry O'Brien, tended to deal with the leadership, and the major scheduling and the major strategy for passing bills. But in working out the substance of the legislation and dealing with the amendments and all of that and the clarifications, I had to work very closely with some of the key people on the education committee.

M: And who were these people?

C: In the House there was Chairman Powell--Adam Clayton Powell. The subcommittee chairman was Perkins of West Virginia--Carl Perkins. He was quite a force for good in getting that bill passed. By the way, I had to develop some situations of strength outside the committee as we got toward the floor, and I worked very closely with Phil Landrum of Georgia, who had been at one time a member of the education committee, but who had subsequently become a member of the rules committee and whose support rallied a

number of key southerners to support the bill. I would say his support was critical to the bill.

I also worked with Manny Celler of the judiciary committee to get the judicial interpretation that helped us avoid traps that were laid for us. In the Senate I worked closely with Wayne Morse, who was the subcommittee chairman for education. I worked in addition with John Brademas, with Hugh Cary, who in the House was very key in working out a modification in the distribution formula that gave us some necessary support. Edith Green was involved, although she ended up opposing us on some key amendments to the bill on the floor.

In the Senate side there was Senator Joe Clark, who was a strong supporter. I worked very closely with the staff members on both sides--the committee staff members--Jack Forsythe and Charles Lee in the Senate. The name of the House man slips me at the moment.

M: Can you estimate at all how much you would spend up there on this bill? Were you up there every day?

C: No, a lot of times they would come up to the White House and we'd work there, too. No, the time I spent on the Hill was principally, that year particularly, was when the bill actually was moving onto the floor. I would pay spot visits up to see a particular person, but we had a lot of strategy meetings in my office. At that time my office was in the Executive Office Building. I subsequently moved over to the White House proper.

M: At these strategy meetings, you would be there, congressmen would be there, other White House staff people?

C: Yes. Sometimes we'd hold strategy meetings in my office and either Henry Wilson, who worked with the House liaison, or Mike Manatos, with the Senate, would come. Sometimes, when it was getting to the crucial stage, we would have a meeting in Larry O'Brien's office. We wouldn't have large groups of congressmen. Usually it would be one or two who would be up to consult on a particular matter. We had Edith Green up to lunch, I remember. Bill Moyers and I had a lunch with her and took her in to see the President. We had briefed him ahead and he tried very hard to keep her from jumping off the reservation on the bill. She subsequently did jump off.

We had a series of meetings, which were sometimes held in my office and sometimes up in the second floor conference room at the White House. We'd have in key groups, the education lobbyists--the NEA, the state school superintendents, the PTA, the National Catholic Welfare Council.

M: Would these people also see the President?

C: On occasion. On occasion, if it seemed that it might give an extra drive, I would memo the President and ask if he would informally drop by the Cabinet Room or the Fish Room and speak to a particular group we had in. We tried to be sparing of his time and didn't just use his time freely. But he was always very receptive if we felt it would do some good.

M: Did the President follow the evolution of this bill closely? Did he know what was going on all the time?

C: Oh yes. We had the habit of systematically reporting to the President through memos. At the end of the day, if there was some significant movement on some area of your responsibility, you'd give the President a report memo. Other times you'd give him a memo in which you needed his concurrence of his decision on some--

M: This would go into the night reading?

C: Yes.

M: So through the passage of this bill, he knew everything that was going on and would use his power when necessary?

C: Yes.

M: Did he drive you on this bill at all? Did he ever call you in and say push harder on this particular individual or this particular--?

C: He had the notion that we wanted the elementary-secondary to be a fast-moving piece of legislation. I think a great deal of exaggeration has been written about the fact that the President demanded that it be steam-rollered through. If he did, he didn't do it in my presence. I know, for example, that Wayne Morse, when it got to the Senate, presented it as his own idea that the bill from the House should be passed without amendment. And Wayne Morse was not the kind of a person that you could just lay the law down to and say, "Do it this way." I think Morse was quite conscious that if the Senate amended it, it would then have to go back and Edith Green would have a second go at maybe disrupting it in the House. He and Edith Green had a natural rivalry and he didn't want to give her that opportunity. But the President did feel that this bill ought to be one of the first ones dealt with, and he found ready cooperation from Carl Perkins and Wayne Morse.

M: Did he say anything to you after the successful passage of the bill?

C: Yes, indeed, he wrote me a little letter in which he said--I have it framed at home--to the effect that, "a great many people were responsible for the Secondary-Elementary Education (Act), but nobody deserves more credit than you do, and I want you to know

how much I appreciate what you've done." He said something, too, at the signing of the bill. As I remember it he was paying credits and afterwards, he grabbed me and said, "Where were you and Bill? Nobody deserves more credit than you all for that." He was very gracious in his compliments.

M: Is this, incidentally, gratifying to a person who is an assistant to the President to get this kind of praise?

C: Oh, yes. It makes all the difference.

M: Was Johnson generally sensitive to that sort of thing?

C: Yes. He, I found, from time to time went out of his way to let you know how much he appreciated what you were doing. He could be, one might say, at times overly generous in stating what your worth was. I had the rather unique experience at the signing of the Public Broadcasting Act--he generally didn't refer to his assistants in public occasions, which is, I think, good practice--but at that time when he signed the act, he singled me out by name and praised me for my role in it. Now the New York Times noted that this was a very unusual thing for an anonymous assistant.

M: But I would assume it made you feel good.

C: Quite good, yes.

M: Now the next year there was an amendment to the Elementary-Secondary (Education) Act, '66, which put in the principal bloc grants. Were you in on this also?

C: Was it in '66 that the Quie amendment was fought? That was '66 or '67? I would have to check the records, but, no, it was not put in. We fought it and fought it very hard. But it was a Republican-led effort to drastically revamp the purposes of the elementary-secondary act. We felt it would also have caused the act to come politically unstuck.

M: Did the Fino affair come out at this point in time--the congressman? I think the pronunciation is Fino.

C: Yes, Fino, but I don't remember--

M: He protested about those funds being possibly used to bus students across town. He objected to that, which apparently caused some difficulty in the Office of Education. Do you recall anything about that?

C: I remember that there were periodic attacks on the office, yes; that it was trying to

stimulate busing, yes.

M: But that didn't have any particular repercussion in the White House?

C: Well, yes, we kept a careful eye on the whole Title VI and civil rights enforcement. I was constantly aware of what the actions were that were going to be taken. They sent me a copy of every action memorandum on Title VI enforcement. We had to review and clear the guidelines that were issued, I believe, on three separate occasions--the revision of the guidelines which had to do with Title VI enforcement--so that this was an area that I kept a weather eye on all the time. The President always wanted to be sure that HEW operated with the fullest communication with the key people in Congress, that it didn't just present them with a fait accompli and catch them all surprised. But he never, to my knowledge, sent the word down to go slow on civil rights enforcement. I'm sure he must have received a lot of heat from various members of Congress from time to time.

M: I would assume that you would be in almost constant contact with the Office of Education, is that right?

C: Yes.

M: With Francis Keppel and later Harold Howe. Was this contact directly between you and the Office of Education, or did you go through the secretary?

C: No. We made it a rule and an understanding that whenever I dealt with anyone it was perfectly open and that the secretary should be kept informed. But I never hesitated to call the operating people in the department and did not have to go through the secretary all the time.

M: This caused no organizational or management problems?

C: I suppose you'd have to ask them, but I did my best to make sure I was not trying to go around the back of the secretary. And I maintained very cordial relations with all three secretaries who were there.

M: Now the Office of Education underwent, apparently, great changes during this period with Keppel and Howe--change from being sort of statistical gathering agency to one that was actually leading in the way of education. Is this due to the reorganization of the Office of Education that came about, or is it due to the personality of the men who were there, or why?

C: I would say both of these, certainly. We were aware--I had very close contacts with Keppel--that no commissioner alone and, possibly not even with the help of the secretary, would have enough clout to make the kind of improvements in the office that were needed

now that this new legislation was going to be on the books. So, with their active consent, the President set up a task force including someone from the Budget Bureau and from the Civil Service Commission and chaired by Dwight Ink, whom we borrowed from the Atomic Energy Commission to do a thorough-going study and make recommendations for the reorganization. So we took the initiative on that even before the Elementary-Secondary Act was formally funded. I believe it was taken about the time that the authorizing legislation passed the Congress.

M: Did the reorganization work out as you wanted it to?

C: I find that dealing with federal bureaucracy is always a--you only accomplish half your purposes at the beginning and even those are undone over time, so I wouldn't say that--if we hadn't done it I think we would have been in a disaster. I think it did help a lot. It still isn't the institution that one would ideally like.

In many ways it needs to be elevated so that the top people are higher up the ladder. It has become too big an operation merely to be an office headed by a man at the commissioner level. I do believe that we would have probably moved more aggressively in that field in elevating the job of commissioner, maybe making him an under secretary, except that by the time this action was needed, Commissioner Howe, who was an outstanding man, had developed enough enemies on the Hill that we could have never gotten him approved for a new job. So that it was a question of whether you sacrificed him merely for the possibility. It was John Gardner's decision, which I concurred in, that he would begin on the health side and try to create an under secretary of health. Then, at a subsequent stage we'd face up to the problem of an under secretary of education.

M: What happened to Francis Keppel? He seems to have made some enemies. There's the public story that he was forced out and, apparently, he lost his effectiveness as commissioner--in part I suppose in regard to Mayor Daley.

C: The Daley thing was a real embarrassment because in my judgment, looking into it, the Office of Education had moved ahead precipitately. It did not have its facts in order. It did not have a bona fide case according to lawyers from the justice department who looked into it. And it had certainly not done the judicious thing of having informed the mayor privately, in advance, so that he would not be caught offguard by this action. That was one in which the White House did intercede and actually it was at White House suggestion that Wilbur Cohen was sent out to try to work out a graceful settlement of that crisis.

M: Did Daley actually come to Washington to see--

C: No, the President was up in, I believe it was, New York, making a speech and Daley was there. He saw him at that time, and he really made his grievances known with great gusto.

M: Did Johnson then say anything to you about this?

C: Yes, he called me from up there and told me what Daley had said and asked me to look into it and to report to him. Subsequently, we had several meetings in the White House. Then, at one meeting, Commissioner Keppel and Wilbur Cohen and--I don't know whether anybody else--went in to see the President and he, again, in a rather affable manner--he didn't show extreme anger--he made clear to them exactly how intensely Daley felt about this and how embarrassing it was to him.

It was at that time--the decision had already been made for Wilbur Cohen to go out and work it out and he did. He worked out an agreement by which the education board in Chicago took some steps in this field and the formal letter was withdrawn, I believe the action was. I'm a little vague how we technically handled it.

M: Do you recall what Daley said to Johnson about this? Obviously, he was upset. Do you recall anything specific about his argument to Johnson about it?

C: No, I don't. I remember it was a pretty bitter indictment of officials in HEW who he felt were trying to undermine him in Chicago--a personal kind of thing.

M: Well, now, did this tend to sour the relationship between Keppel and the President?

C: I was never aware that it did. It was subsequent to that, as I remember it--this would have to be checked--that the job of assistant secretary of HEW for education was established and that the President, and I remember taking him the recommendation, approved having Keppel appointed to that while continuing to hold the commissionership. It was Keppel who subsequently took the initiative and came to me and said that he would like to resign as commissioner and serve on as assistant secretary, which he did for a time. Then subsequent to that, it was Keppel among others, including Gardner, who strongly endorsed bringing in Howe as his successor so that there was none of the pattern of presidential irritation toward Keppel that I could detect.

I'm sure there were irritations. One of them I think was he was very much irritated that Henry Loomis was brought in as deputy commissioner without White House consultation. Subsequent to his appointment as deputy commissioner, Loomis held a press conference. He had been in USIA, and then he apparently gave some background interviews in which he implied that--Loomis at that time was director of the Voice of America--that political interference was being imposed on the Voice of America.

Well, Loomis avowed that he certainly wasn't talking about the President or the White House, that he had been talking about interference from the state department. But none of this was clarified in the press and the President felt that Loomis had shown extremely bad judgment in using the press as a platform for trying to clear up something

like that. He knew that he had never interfered with the Voice of America. So he was, I would say, down on Loomis from that time on. Loomis never showed any skill in trying to make amends for having mishandled the thing and I think that was one thing the President did hold against Keppel.

M: During this period of time while you were there, the Office of Education apparently had some controversy with the Department of Labor over manpower training. Is this correct?

C: Oh, I'm sure, yes. There was always that kind of thing going on.

M: Did you get in on any of those bureaucratic fights of that nature?

C: I remember that in the drafting of the legislative messages we had several flaps over this matter of manpower training and its proper coordination. This was regarded as something of a perennial headache. I don't remember getting into any. We would have times when Secretary Wirtz was deeply upset by the formulation of a legislative program. The time I remember clearly was when Califano was serving as coordinator of the legislative review and Wirtz would send word that he had not been consulted and there would be a last minute flap over that.

M: At what point in time along here did you get involved in the health legislation?

C: The first year, in '65, I believe health was the first message sent up. Horace Busby served as coordinator for that. When Busby left the White House, because I had been working so closely on education matters, it just naturally evolved that I took over the health matters. I don't remember the precise time or how it occurred, but it just gradually developed.

M: Did you work on Medicare then?

C: Yes, I served that, although I didn't have to work as closely on that, as intimately, as on some of the education bills because Wilbur Cohen, who always had very good direct relations with the President, was serving as chief strategist for the Medicare legislation on the Hill.

M: Do you have any impressions of Wilbur Cohen, incidentally? You worked with him--

C: Oh, yes.

M: --at great length. Was he a capable, able individual?

C: Very much so. He was, in some ways, the ideal public servant, in that he had great ideals and great freshness of approach to matters. Yet he was also very shrewd and very skilled in how to maneuver programs through Congress.

M: So he was an expert on the Hill, then?

C: Yes. He showed no sign, up until the very day he left office, of ever getting bureaucratic battlefatigue. It's an affliction that can happen to anybody in government.

M: You mean by that, after working so long in it, that you just get worn out?

C: Yes. You can tell. This happens. It happened to Keppel. I think that Keppel, as he told me, frankly was just exhausted with the wear and tear and the political infighting on the Hill, and he felt that his usefulness had reached a point of diminishing returns. I don't think he harbored any grudges against the President when he left. If he did, I was not aware of them.

M: Did you get involved then in other health measures as time went by, such as the heart-cancer and stroke bill?

C: Oh, yes. That one, too, the commission and its report had come out before I became actively charged in this area, but subsequently I became a very close working ally with Dr. DeBakey and others who were trying to move that legislation forward.

M: What was the role of DeBakey in that?

C: He was chairman of the heart-cancer-stroke commission that the President appointed.

M: Did he come up and testify then?

C: Oh, yes, he was a very active promoter for the recommendations for this.

M: Was there any particular opposition on this bill?

C: Heart-cancer?

M: Yes.

C: Oh, yes. I think it had to be somewhat toned down instead of setting up direct centers, as they were called. The nature of the heart-cancer-stroke thing became a bit more fuzzily defined in the legislation as it finally cleared Congress. But it was, in some ways, a more radical measure certainly than Medicare in terms of organizing or trying to stimulate innovation in health services. But the AMA was so preoccupied with Medicare that I don't think it had quite the energy or perhaps the perception to concentrate on the heart-cancer-stroke.

M: How did the President placate the AMA?

C: He didn't placate them. He talked very directly to them. I remember, as we were trying to work out--I would have to check my records on this whether it was Medicare or heart-cancer-stroke. It was one of the major health bills. I got a call that John Gardner had met several times with the leaders of the AMA and they were at loggersheads. He wondered if he could bring the group over to the White House to meet with me. I didn't feel at that time that that would be a very appropriate appeal procedure, so I hastily wrote the President a memo and described the situation and suggested that we ought to meet in the Fish Room and that he come in. I suggested some points that he could make to the AMA. Well, he did come in and gave them one of his very skilled lectures which was both, in some ways, conciliating in the sense of "we want to work closely with you, we want to know your problems and we want you to know ours," but at the same time indicated very subtly and with some humor that he was aware of the history of doctors just standing against everything and that he didn't expect to be deterred by that philosophy.

M: Apparently Lyndon Johnson, in such situations as that, was quite an expert.

C: I've seen him take groups like that and almost mesmerize them, yes.

M: How can he do that? What is there about him that can handle a group of that nature, which was hostile to him really?

C: He had the capacity, which he developed over long years of trying to bring together hostile groups in Congress, of combining all of his charm, all of his eloquence, shrewdness, to overpower a group like that. You had to be present at such an occasion to be aware of exactly how effective he could be because a lot of that persuasiveness did not come across on television or in the very large public gatherings.

M: Of course the question is, why should he be effective in a group such as the AMA, and yet not be able to transmit this over television.

C: Oh, I think television is an instrument that very few politicians, if any, have really mastered in terms of knowing how to use it for genuine persuasion.

M: Obviously there's a problem of communication. I mean, the President has to communicate back. What you've indicated is that he could communicate effectively in the small groups but not with a large group.

C: I would say, as he himself has said, that he never felt comfortable using television as a means of communication, that he had to feel a man close up. Now this didn't have to be necessarily an intimate group. I've seen him do it with large groups in the East Room of the White House. I've seen him at times, for example, when he gave the civil rights speech to the joint session of Congress--quite a large gathering--he was able to project a forcefulness that was very impressive, very persuasive. But there is a difference between

that and having to go through the television tube. Somehow the force and strength got filtered out. He became instead a not very graceful figure who neither by his appearance nor his voice met the needs of persuasion in the privacy of a living room.

Now there are not many who have. In retrospect I would say that John F. Kennedy did. On occasion he was good at this, but there were times too when he lost his audience. I remember when he gave his "Older American" speech in Madison Square Garden. It was judged a real calamity in terms of the television viewing audience.

M: Was Johnson well aware of this problem of television?

C: I think he was and I think it was what caused him to be so really, in a word, shy about the use of television.

M: Did he ever say anything to you about this? Did he try to change the nature of his speeches for example?

C: Well, yes. He said things that indicated time and again that he knew better than we did about his shortcomings on television. He had television advisers, like Bob Kintner and others, who gave advice on how to project better television. I didn't ever see that it made any great difference in his technique. He was not that manipulable in terms of adapting himself to a media which he was uncomfortable in.

M: Well, to return to the health legislation--

C: How long are we going to do it today?

M: As long as you care to go.

C: Let's break this up at 4:30 because there are some things I've got--

M: Let me ask briefly then about some of this legislation. Were you involved in the Mental Retardation Bill of 1965?

C: To a degree, although nothing significant pops to mind about it at this moment.

M: Let's go down the checklist then. How about the Drug Abuse Act of 1965?

C: All these bills in that area--well, no, in '65 Busby had been the coordinator for the health message, so I really did not get terribly involved in the '65 legislation.

M: How about in the area of pollution, such as air pollution and water pollution? Did that fall into your category?

C: Not too much in '65, I picked it up later.

M: Well, then were you in on, say, the Air Quality Act of '67?

C: To a degree. It was coordinated in Califano's office. I was involved in the sessions on it, but it wasn't a prime project of mine.

M: How about the Higher Education Act?

C: All of those, yes.

M: In those higher education acts was there any great difficulty that you had not faced, say, with elementary-secondary education?

C: No, they did not have quite the political pitfalls that elementary-secondary education had. That was more a question of defining priorities and trying to stimulate both excellence in higher education and also to deal with the disadvantaged, both in the institutions and in the individuals who go into higher education.

M: How about some of these other acts, such as the truth-in-lending?

C: No, I didn't have anything to do with it.

M: Fair Package Labeling Act?

C: No.

M: Or the Cigarette Labeling Act?

C: The Cigarette Labeling Act came out of HEW, yes. It would have been one of those. I forget the specifics for that one. I would have had to be on the review for the groups that went over it.

M: For future reference in these interviews, then, what areas were you in beyond the health and education legislation?

C: I worked very closely in dealing with the USIA and developing the proposal for the communication task force; the development of the Public Broadcasting Corporation--that is, educational radio and television. I dealt with the various other cultural and educational activities, such as the Smithsonian and its projects; the national galleries--art, portrait gallery; the new museum, that's being started opposite the White House. I dealt with the humanities and the arts endowments. I--the CIA--the exposure of the students--I worked on that and served as liaison to the Katzenbach and Rusk task forces. Worked on the

International Education Act, it came under HEW. It was a White House initiative.

M: Were you involved with beautification?

C: I served for a time at the President's request and as liaison with Alan Boyd when they were trying to save the Highway Beauty Act, yes.

M: How about the reorganizations, such as the formation of the Department of Transportation?

C: No.

M: Or HUD or any of that?

C: No.

M: Well, why don't we cut it at this point?

C: All right.