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DOUGLASS CATER ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW III

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ACCESSION NUMBER 91-12

INTERVIEW III

DATE: May 26, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: DOUGLASS CATER

INTERVIEWER: Joe B. Frantz

PLACE: Palo Alto, California

F: Now what I'd like to do, Doug, is just go into that matter of where you dreamed it up and who dreamed it up. Was this a push from inside HEW, or inside the Congress, or from the scholarly world, or from the White House, or where? Or was it your baby?

C: Well, that's the hardest question you could have asked, the origins of something like that. The immediate origins of that was the necessity to do a speech for the Smithsonian, which was celebrating its one hundredth anniversary, I guess. Or was it one hundred and fifty? Or something, one of the [two].

F: This was in 1965. I'm not going to hold you to dates, but I knew.

C: Was it 1965, the Smithsonian? I would have sworn it was a little later, but I guess that's right. And I guess it was in the fall.

I did some research, and I was the one that was writing the speech. I had developed, over the period, rather close relations with Dillon Ripley who I thought was doing a great job. He was particularly anxious that the President make something big out of this.

[James] Smithson had given the initial bequest in his will that has led to, after much trouble, setting up the Smithsonian Institution. He was an illegitimate Englishman, who never did come to the United States. So in preparing that speech, and I think I consulted with Charles Frankel, who was the assistant secretary of state for cultural affairs, we came up with the idea of extending the concept of the Great Society with its emphasis on education and health to the world. We wanted to do it without it sounding like we were planning to impose an American vision on the world, but that was the notion. Johnson liked the idea. I can't recall anything particularly significant or traumatic in the preparation of that speech. It was one of the few that he didn't [change]. I was never a very good speech draftsman. I don't like the rhetoric of speeches, especially. He always went heavy on rhetoric. But this was one I wrote that he didn't farm out elsewhere. You frequently sent a speech draft in, and the next thing you heard, somebody else was working on it.

F: Everybody in the place got hold of it before you were through.

C: This one, he took it as it stood and didn't have any last minute [changes]. Quite frequently, at the last minute, he'd call you in just as you were about to head off to the occasion and say, "Can't you add something to it that will make it sexy or get us a headline?" This one, he lived with it, and it went over well.

F: There wasn't any selling him on the idea? He bought that at the beginning?

C: He bought the idea at the beginning. I'm trying to think in relationship--there was one other, when he was going out to Vietnam on one of these trips, but I believe it must have been later.

F: Well, he signed the act in Thailand or somewhere out there.

C: That's right, yes. Well, that's right, because we prepared another idea for a speech that he would give in Honolulu en route and he did give a portion of it there. But I guess that was a follow-up to the initial Smithsonian idea.

F: Now, he signed this in October, end of October 1966, at ceremonies at--you'll have to get me on the pronunciation--but Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

C: Yes, right. Then the rather traditional thing followed. I always made it the business in areas that I was working in that each thing would trigger a succeeding action. And he, I think, in that speech, although you would have to check, indicated that he was going to set up a task force to review this. And so we did; we set up one. Frankel was the chairman of it, and it had some distinguished members. The concept of the International Education Act grew out of that task force.

F: You must have given a pretty quick charge to your task force, because you had it introduced in Congress by January.

C: In January, yes. Well, when was the Smithsonian speech?

F: It was September 16.

C: We had the whole fall, yes. And we also had an International Education Act in that same State of the Union. We had two parallel acts. I sat in with the task force, as did Harry McPherson; the President asked both of us to participate in it. He showed a continuing interest in it through the fall. I don't recall that there were any big issues that divided us, although it might be interesting to check with some of the others on that. The act itself, one could say in retrospect, was misnamed; it might have had a greater legislative success if we'd called it the Act to Support International Studies in American Universities. Because it was not in its thrust designed to create overseas capacities; it was to reinforce the capacity in American universities to build the infrastructure of international studies.

F: I gather there was some misconception among the opposition that you were going to beef

up the education programs abroad and help [inaudible] here and there.

C: Yes. Books for the Hottentots, instead of milk. We fought that misconception all the way along. I think that, frankly, many of them just wanted to keep it, because it was clearly an act to reinforce a vital aspect of American studies in American institutions. And as a result of that, we were able to get support from key American educators, and we created quite a lobbying outfit from various institutions that were important to particular members of the Appropriations Committee. We had the chap from [Texas], Mahon. Is he Baylor, or which [college]?

F: Yes.

C: I think it was Baylor. The President was working very strong on Mahon. Well, this was at a later stage. This was after we got the act passed. The act attracted active support from key people in Congress. John Brademas took a particular interest in it. It got caught in a last-minute time squeeze, as frequently things do. We were able to get it through that same session of Congress that we sent it up, in 1966, and it got through in the fall. I very well remember there in the House that it was a cliff-hanger deadline, trying to get it out of committee and onto the floor before the end of the session. I remember one session in which we were trying to get the votes for Ways and Means, and it turned out one of the key members we needed--I've forgotten his name--was holed up in the Congressional Hotel on some sort of binge. We had to send his friends over, and get him out, and get him to the right meeting, in order to get a Ways and Means vote.

F: Showed him which was his right hand, right?

But you suspended the rules in the House, which called for a two-thirds vote, which, of course, is a good margin.

C: I see.

F: It passed 195 to 95, which just gave you five votes clearance, which is pretty tight. I suppose somebody had counted in there and decided it was worth the risk.

C: Now you're telling me something that memory has fuzzed on me. Did we do that because we didn't have a rule?

F: You did it because you were out of time; you got it done on the last day, the way things went.

C: Yes.

F: And I suppose you preferred that to laying it over into another session.

C: Yes, well, I think it's a tribute that an act that was called International Education, that you

could get a two-thirds vote for it on the last day. I can very well understand their saying, "What's the big rush on this?" But this is the whole secret of the Johnson legislative strategy, was to keep a rolling momentum; that if things get bogged down in Congress, then it takes ten times as much effort to get them.

F: That's when they start whittling on them.

C: Yes, and then you get into compromises and wheeling and dealing, and all that.

F: Now, who sort of carries the ball in Congress on this? Do you do that, or John Gardner as secretary of HEW, or was it just kind of a mass assault?

C: Well, we didn't, in the White House, leave anything to the departments because it's a sad but true fact that a call from the White House has far more influence, except with very limited committee people, than a call from a department. And John Gardner was not what you'd call a super-pressure salesman anyway. And by this time, I believe Frank Keppel was kind of getting ready to phase out, and Harold Howe, Doc Howe, who had been a member of the task force, but hadn't been appointed, I don't believe--do you remember the dates when they came in?

F: No, I don't.

C: So because this was the key to the President's program, and it happened to have a particular interest of mine, I spent a great deal of time on it. But we had people like Herman Wells, chancellor of the University of Indiana, and a little group was set up that did a lot of visitation on the Hill. And Wells was always a very--do you know him?

F: A little rotund.

C: A little rotund. He was very good in his action. As I say, we had in the meanwhile, by the way, set up [a committee]. Part of the act was to authorize a permanent advisory committee that would serve for international education and would have a--I believe; yes, it was appointed by the President. But in the meanwhile and there again the dates would be important, but the President designated these people as acting, and they began to work. It included Frank Rose, the president of the University of Alabama; it included the chap from Texas who subsequently became under secretary of HEW, and then later--

F: McCrocklin.

C: Fellow with his Ph.D.--

F: Could have done without him.

C: What's happened to him?

F: He's selling real estate and making a fortune.

C: Is he?

F: Yes, he's developing one of those hill country areas.

C: When you think of the scandals that hit the Johnson Administration, they seem so, almost trivial. There was poor old Walter Jenkins' affair; there was that one, with a--

F: Forged Ph.D.

C: --forged Ph.D., but none of the dirty stuff.

F: None of them likely to subvert the government.

C: Well, anyway, this committee served as a kind of a coordinating committee, and we worked hard on getting key members of Congress committed to it. This, by the way, had more pertinence after the act was passed and we were trying to get it funded. But it worked also during the period. Of course, when I worked on a piece of legislation, I did it always in close collaboration with--in this case it would've been Henry Hall Wilson, who was the active liaison. He would know what I was doing, and we wouldn't cross each other up. I think the Johnson White House had probably the most effective kind of legislative strategy of any administration I've ever observed. We worked very well, and we didn't stir up jealousies and resentments in Congress. But anyway, we passed the act. And then, of course, came the tragic development that it was never funded. I believe it's still legislatively in existence, isn't it?

F: I think it is.

C: But it's never gotten funded.

F: It's on the books.

C: And what makes me feel particularly badly is that if one was doing a brutally realistic assessment, the fact that it was passed and got that prominent has complicated the problem of international studies, because the foundations, the private foundations, like Ford, began to phase out; and as a result, they had increasingly hard times instead of better times. And in trying to get it funded, this is one that the President showed personal interest in at my recommendation, he invited Chairman Mahon up to the White House one evening. I was present with him and Mahon, and we had Doc Howe in there, too, in the little office off the Oval Office, and for over an hour Johnson, personally, pled with Mahon, said, "There are two acts. If you will give us some money for those, you can take three times that much out of any place else you want." One was the Teacher Corps, and the other was the International Education Act. And finally, he did get a little money for the Teacher Corps, but Mahon just--

F: Didn't give on that.

C: On the International Education.

F: He stood up to him.

C: Yes.

F: Why? What were his reasons?

C: He said the committee had an agreement among itself that [there would be] no new starts; that that was the only way that it could impose some budget control. And he said once a program is started, then we haven't got the strength or the courage to kill it.

F: It must have been a rough session.

C: Well, it was a poignant session. Johnson didn't get mad, because he treated men like Mahon with great respect. It ended sort of on a sad note with Johnson still pleading and Mahon still saying there was nothing he could do about it.

F: Kind of like turning down your best friend for a bank loan.

Did Adam Clayton Powell figure in on this at all, or did he leave it to Brademas to floor manage and handle the whole thing? He was the ultimate chairman of the Education Committee.

C: Yes. I had a very interesting relationship with Powell, and I'm trying to remember if it extended to this act or what it had to do with some of the others. Powell was a shameless sort. He would engage in the most unsubtle type of blackmail with the White House, but he apparently had divided it up in his own mind and he would treat different members of the staff differently. I remember one time just before an act was going to come up on the floor, he called and just bluntly told Marvin Watson that he had to have money to pay off this lawsuit that he'd been stuck with. I guess it was a libel action.

F: Yes. That lady.

C: Yes, that lady. With me, he never did that. He could be very curious. I would go up and see him in the middle of the afternoon; he would sit there like in a night club. All the curtains were closed and music was playing. He would offer me a drink, and he'd tell a kind of shallowish risqué story and like he'd never heard of sex before. But he would deal straight with me on legislative matters. I thought in terms of our legislative program, he always performed.

Now, in the case of that time he tried to call Watson, he actually called him when the President was present. And the President picked up the phone and laced him out like

he was talking to a renegade son; just chewed him. This is secondhand, but I was told about it. Johnson always dealt very bluntly with Powell. He didn't play around with him, which I think was probably wise, because I don't think he could have ever been a little bit pregnant with Powell.

F: But the two men sort of understood each other and they could work together.

C: Yes, and Johnson would say, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

F: A little later that would have made a nice one for the headlines.

C: I remember he did it once in a receiving line. Powell was up for a reception and was going through the line, and old Johnson took him aside and really gave him a Dutch uncle treatment there.

F: Powell just let those things roll off?

C: Yes. He had a great capacity for letting it roll off his back. I always found Powell basically was well motivated. I just kind of liked him. I liked dealing with him.

He wasn't as easy to deal with as Perkins was. Perkins was always wanting to know what the marching orders were, and he was very much looking for guidance from the White House.

F: While this bill was under consideration, Representative Robert McClory--name doesn't mean much to me--from Illinois, raised an objection that it did not do what Johnson had said he was going to do in his Smithsonian speech. Is that legitimate, or did it follow the Smithsonian outline?

C: Well, the Smithsonian outline was--

F: First of all, I don't know why he would raise that kind of objection in what is not an official speech. It was just a bill. You don't write your speeches in Smithsonian pronouncements.

C: Well, the International Education Act--let's face it, it was a modest bill. It was designed to reinforce a particular aspect of American education. It was not a foreign aid act. So in that sense, I suppose--and I think this is quite frequently the strategy of the Republicans, is that they hit you from both sides. They say, "We can't afford to do it. You say you're doing something great for the world, and here all you're doing is building up some international educational centers." I don't remember the McClory things as being significant. But sure, compared to the rhetoric of [the] Smithsonian, this was a modest beginning, but it would have reinforced the kind of infrastructure and personnel who would be able to do effective things abroad. We already had an international aid bill. There would have been no particular point in doing that.

Now, as concomitant with that act--and there again, chronology all runs together for me--we went to great, unholy lengths to try to do something imaginative with the counterpart funds that the Indians had. We wanted to use that as a model, and do it wherever we had some excess counterpart. And that was to create an Indo-American foundation. The initial idea for that one had been Chester Bowles, who was ambassador to India. We took that, and I went up to the Hill with Johnson's approval and finally sold Senator Ellender that this would be a legitimate use of these counterpart funds, and had it all worked out so that when Mrs. Gandhi came over at a state dinner, the President was going to announce this in the toast. And she had been cleared and everything; we had the evening, it was announced, and it would have created a multi-billion dollar foundation that, whereas it was using funny money, still, it meant a new priority in the Indian budget for education and one that was under separate control from the government. Then Mrs. Gandhi nicely accepted it, went back to India. Several of the ideologues, including Krishna Menon, attacked it. And she just did a flip-flop, and the whole thing was killed. It never went through.

F: Never really got out into the open, did it?

C: What do you mean there?

F: Public discussions, press discussions, so forth. This was done strictly at the upper levels.

C: You mean in India, or in this country?

F: Oh, in either of the countries.

C: In this country, it was just regarded, I think, as part of the Johnson new emphasis on international education. And I mentioned it being a part of a package of things that we wanted to do through administrative action or, in that case, that was executive action, but it had to have the consent of the appropriate committees of Congress. It would all be part of the package. Now that I talk, I'm remembering more clearly that this task force surveyed all the things that we could do that would reinforce international education. And the only thing for which we needed new legislative authority was this International Education Act. The rest of the things could be done by the President asserting new priorities. And one of these, I remember now, we got in the top people in AID, went over the expenditure of AID money and made a presidential declaration that education was to have a new priority; he was going to spend more of AID money, more counterpart money, more of everything for education and health. In these things, we did health parallels in education.

F: Incidentally, I remember that during the International Education Act hearings--I don't remember if it was in the House or Senate, I think it was the Senate--David Bell came in from AID to testify for the proposed act. It was something that would enhance his program.

C: Well, they were obliging. Although when you got down to the nuts and bolts with the AID people, they always had more immediate needs that they wanted, things like building highways or building businesses. So getting a bigger share for something like education was not always easy. I haven't seen any post mortem, but they gave us [reports]. We required, I think, quarterly reports as to how well they were living up to this new priority and they would come in with reports on it. But I was never totally clear as to how much the thing had been reoriented.

F: Incidentally, I would bet I've got at least a hundred tapes that mention that room next to the Oval Room, and it's always identified as something like that. Was it ever named? It would have been a great convenience for history to have had a sharp title, like Fish Room, or Cabinet Room, or something.

C: It was a funny little room. It was just big enough for . . . .

F: Kind of an oversized cloakroom, really.

C: Yes. I can remember it to this day. It had kind of a lounge--not lounge, but one of those Knoll chairs over in the corner that the President would sit in. And it had a little sofa and then a little desk up against the wall. And it was a very cozy room. I can understand why presidents got a little weary of the Oval Office. The Oval Office opens in too many directions. You never felt like you were in a room. It opened out into the yard. It had an opening out into Juanita's office. It had an opening into Marvin's office.

F: Door in every direction.

C: Yes.

F: After that session with Mahon, did the President just kind of give up on trying to get it funded? You had the 1967 and 1968 sessions.

C: He never told me to give up. We fought it through each session. Of course, by the 1967 session, he was having to go to the mat on that surtax business, and then things really did take a turn.

I remember one thing from Wilbur Cohen, who was an undersecretary. He said to me years later, and I think it probably indicated a kind of resentment at the time, he felt we spent too much of our energy fighting the little chickenshit bills like the Teacher Corps, and that would have been better spent on the bigger things. And of course, that's always the question. I'm not sure [about] that. Of course, the bigger things, we weren't having much problem with. Johnson, by the time the war began to cut into the budget, then it was my strategy and I think it was his: "Let's get as much on the books as we can, and even if we can't afford to fund them significantly now, it's very rarely that a program dies. Let's get started and let them grow." So I would have said that except for this negative effect on the foundation world, it was a useful thing to get that act passed.

F: What you don't have is the time perspective, and it may be that this turns out to be a real wedge somewhere down the line, that if you hadn't done it.

C: Yes. Still at least up until a year or two ago, I was getting reports from people in HEW that they were still taking the mandate seriously. They had a guy that was especially charged with carrying out the spirit of the International Education Act in the existing programs. And so, I don't know.

I think probably--one thing about the foundations is that they might have backed out of that field anyway. All private foundations, by their nature, don't want to get stuck with permanent programs. They want to move into a field and then move out of it. There's a great amount of faddism about what private foundations do.

F: Yes. I also suspected--never heard anything out of Johnson on this--that he had a kind of a reverse domino theory on things. If you don't push the comparative minutiae, you don't get the big things either. That is, that you encourage resistance, if you don't build small structures.

C: His philosophy of Congress, which is expressed variously, is, "If you're not doing it to them, they're doing it to you." And the whole purpose of the President's program was to provide an agenda to keep Congress busy. And that meant more than just two or three big things. It meant a lot of things that the various subcommittees would get preoccupied with.

F: Did the President, as far as you know, feel that John Gardner was effective with Congress, or that he was just an extremely intelligent man in the wrong position?

C: No, I never heard him say that. And I think he always respected Gardner's integrity. The President didn't often think of using [his cabinet]. Well, actually, I was going to say, the President counted on his White House staff more than he did on his [cabinet]. He often said the guys in the congressional offices over in the departments, they don't know what they're doing, just can't do anything. I remember, on two or three occasions, Gardner and I would go up on the Hill together to perform a mission, and on one or two occasions I would set up [luncheons]. For example, Congressman Phil Landrum from Georgia, who had been a tower of strength for us in getting the Elementary-Secondary Education Act passed, began to have real trouble with Title VI in his constituency. And I remember one time I set up a luncheon at HEW to get Landrum over, just to show that we honored him and respected him, and let him make his complaints about what his problems were. And yet, never did the President ever order me to direct HEW to go easy on a Title VI thing, which was a continuing one. I requested, and they always sent me, reports on where they were moving and what congressmen it affected. And I would routinely report that to the President, so he would know where the next bitch is going to come from. Harold Cooley, for example, was always crying. He said it was going to defeat him, and in fact I think it did.

Yet the President on Title VI never wavered. There was only one exception to that, and that was the Chicago one, which was, curiously, a northern application of Title VI in which the department had--well, actually, it was Frank Keppel in the Office of Education who had sent a letter off, an order on a Chicago school thing. Daley blew up. And then the Justice Department lawyer said that the HEW lawyers didn't have a leg to stand on. Then Johnson really did get sore about that one. He sent Wilbur Cohen flying out there, and Wilbur negotiated a truce.

In terms of other action, the President was very good on that. Now I don't think he thought of John Gardner as being a powerhouse on the Hill, but, of course, there was always Wilbur Cohen, who was.

F: I was going to say, Cohen was a much more compatible [man] in figuring strategy and who to talk to.

C: Right. And the President felt a great empathy for Wilbur Cohen. They would conspire. I remember how proud the President was when he--and I think it was Wilbur's idea that we put together the three-layer cake of Medicare, Medicaid, and something else that the Republicans were proposing and said, "Well, all right. We'll buy all three of them." The President asked, "Well, how much will it cost me?" And Wilbur said, "A billion dollars." And the President said, "Damn." He used to tell that story very often and, as a result, they outfoxed the opposition on Medicare.

F: Did you, as time went on, find it easier to dispose of the arguments against federal aid to education? Did this become almost vulgar in the congressional mind and no longer a place to make a stand?

C: What?

F: Well, in general, you know, every time the government, and particularly the White House, brought up some programs at the outset, as far as, going back to Truman, the federal assistance to education, why you raised that spectre that you were going to take over the country and it was going to be one big think piece under federal direction. That was one of the best emotional arguments. You felt it especially in your southern constituencies, but you felt it all over. And I wondered whether that just sort of got disposed of and laid aside?

C: Well, no, I think . . . .

F: Or did you have to fight that battle every time?

C: No, no. Well, once we got the Elementary-Secondary Education Act passed, it was an enormous breakthrough psychologically, so that other things became much simpler. But that one was done with a tremendous amount of political strategy. First of all, there'd been the task force on education that John Gardner had been chairman of, in which it

proposes priority of our disadvantaged. And it was Frank Keppel, who really was no mean political strategist, who sold me on the idea that here was one in which we could break through on the church front. He conducted initial explorations with the various Catholic leaders, in which they admitted that they could not make an all-out stand against federal aid with priorities that had the Title I priorities in it.

F: Is Frank Catholic?

C: No, Frank was not Catholic. No, he was good New England WASP, but he was able to talk, and of course--I don't know. I think I went over this to a degree in the other interview. But there was a lot of fuzziness in that Title I as to what the benefits to parochial students were going to be. It was agreed there'd be no benefits per se for parochial schools, but what are they going to get to share?

Boy, it finally came down, during the passage in the House, in which they were trying to put old [Congressman Carl] Perkins on the mat. And Perkins, coming from Kentucky, couldn't, both in his own constituency and I think his own beliefs, admit that there was going to be much help for parochial education in there. There were some delicate dialogues in which the record got awfully fuzzy. Our feeling and initiative was that this was a battle that we wanted to move to a state and local level and let them fight it out there. Which is what happened. But once that church breakthrough was made and the passage of the Civil Rights Act, which eliminated the need for Adam Clayton Powell to attach a civil rights amendment to every piece of substantive legislation, the two big roadblocks had been passed.

Then the state school officers posed a bit of a problem, and, of course, Mrs. Green, Congresswoman Edith Green, ended up finding ways to join up with the Republicans and the die-hard southerners to fight this act when it passed the Senate.

F: Was her role unexpected? Or could you see it coming?

C: We knew all along that she was going to be unpredictable and very snide things were said among those who had to work with her about the quality of her womanhood. And I'm afraid the male chauvinist attitudes were reflected. I wouldn't like all those on tape. The President had her in, too. One day I had her up to lunch to try to smooth her feathers. We would do that. I'd get her up. It was always hard with Johnson.

F: Now, when you would bring them to lunch, would you take them down there in the staff dining room, or would he go upstairs? Or would he drop in during the [luncheon]?

C: No, what he would do was send word that he'd like to see them, and then take them up to the office. On occasion, he would say, "Come on over. I'm having lunch." And he wouldn't ever come down there at lunch time, but he might take over the lunch, and we'd go over to his own dining room. But with Johnson, the one thing you learned were techniques for getting him involved without getting him committed. He hated to make a

commitment of his calendar more than ten minutes in advance. So what you would do is you would say, "Mr. President"--in a memo--"I'm having Mrs. Green to lunch tomorrow. I'm going to try to make this effect on her. Of course, it would be very helpful if she could drop in and you say a word to her." That kind of thing, he would do; and it would give him a nice . . . .

F: Gave him the power to work it out.

C: Well, it meant that he [wasn't committed] the previous day. I've never seen a man who hated to be hog-tied by a calendar more than he did. I remember the famous time when it was a question whether he was going to attend an event at the coliseum there in Houston; the plane literally took off, and Johnson still hadn't made up his mind, or hadn't been willing to make a commitment as to whether he was going to go by Houston on the way to the Ranch. And so he headed off into the--

F: In that direction.

C: What you learned to do was to schedule things which you were going to do, and then you'd say, "Gee, it would be helpful if you would do it." And then he'd come and you couldn't get rid of him, I mean, once he arrived at the thing.

F: It would throw your whole calender out of whack.

C: Oh, he'd spend hours and hours. He was an interesting man.

F: Well, you think we've about killed international education?

C: I think that's about all I can remember of it.

F: Did he ever remark to you that it was a disappointment, or did it just become a closed subject?

C: I don't remember that he did. I think, in the last year and a half, there were so many various kinds of disappointments that that one didn't stand out as sort of the crowning one.

My most poignant moments on disappointments were in December of 1967. Gardner came down to the Ranch. We were down there for final budget reviews and legislative. There had been some real whacks in the HEW budget drawn by the Budget Bureau, and he [Gardner] came down to appeal them. We met there in the living room there at the Ranch, and Gardner was going through his own turmoil. I think there had been some rumors that he was disaffected, that he was thinking about leaving. You know how to sift through those, how much they are cooking up for the press. Gardner was always a little bit [reserved] around the President. He's a quiet kind of man, and they never had an easy conversational relationship. It came his turn and he made what I

thought was a pretty poor pitch that it was politically important to restore these things. Well, the President didn't listen to Gardner for politics. He listened to him as a great educator.

F: [Inaudible].

C: Yes. And the President said, "I can't do it." And, in the course of it Gardner had mentioned some other appropriation that was in the budget, and the President turned to Shultze and said, "I thought that one had to be cut out, too." And Shultze said something or other and he said, "No, that one's got to go, too." So, in essence, Gardner ended up with less than he walked in the room with.

We had lunch and it was kind of a quiet time. Then he took us on one of those perennial trips around the Ranch. Gardner was in the front; he sat there quietly and the President's talking with him and he ended up at the plane to fly us back to Washington. Just as we were getting out of the car, the President turned and put his arm around Gardner. [He] said, "Don't worry, John. We're going to end this war and then you'll have all the money you want for education, and health, and everything else." And it really was just a kind of a poignant moment.

By that time, this was December of 1967, his back was to the wall, and he was being held to cutting the budget in order to get his surtax, which had been delayed too long really. It really had triggered the inflation. And then we flew back to Washington. And on the seven o'clock news the next morning, Dan Schorr came on and said that the President had turned down Gardner's appeal, and that they wanted--what was it?--to change, well, to issue some executive language in connection with one of the acts that he was signing and that he was so disappointed that he left the Ranch without waiting for the President to sign the act. And I have never known; I've tried to talk to Daniel Schorr since then on [that]. Yes, I was with Gardner from the time he arrived to the time he got back to Washington which was after midnight; and how he . . . . It was an exaggerated story. The President and Gardner did leave the Ranch unhappy, but the specifics were inaccurate. He didn't leave because [of that] or refuse to stay to sign the legislation. Somebody in HEW, though, had gotten the message and had tipped off Schorr; that then led to the series of things, press stories and other things, that finally led to Gardner's resigning which was one of the unhappy moments.

F: Didn't Gardner actually leave because in effect he felt that he was rejected? Well, you never know how much of that is press.

C: No. Well, I go into that in my novel; that's actually what the novel is based around. I think Gardner had lost faith that Johnson could stay on top of the situation. Of course, nobody knew that Johnson wasn't planning to run again. I think he, at one point, told the President in one of those subsequent sessions that he didn't think the President could handle . . . . John was a very intuitive man, too, and he saw the mounting troubles and domestic ones. He was not an anti-Vietnam man. He made it clear, after he left, that he

had not left over Vietnam.

It was always a little muddled as to why he did leave. And in trying to keep him from leaving, I had cooked up the notion, which the President approved, that his ostensible reason to leave was to head this Urban Coalition. And the President called him over and suggested that he was willing to let him head the Urban Coalition and remain on as secretary. And Gardner was prepared, was consulting with the various leaders of the Urban Coalition, the backers of it, to see if he could work that out. And I have every reason to think that he was doing that in good faith. Then suddenly, the ***New York Times*** carried a front page story saying he was leaving and it was decided it was too late to remedy the situation; he had become a cause célèbre.

F: He and Johnson never actually broke, though?

C: No, in fact . . . .

F: I know Gardner's been back many times since.

C: The President had him over and his announcement that he was leaving was made at the White House. And he [Johnson] had a dinner for Gardner and for two or three others in which he paid elegant tribute to him. There were a lot of snide stories that kept appearing, but always once something goes sour, there's plenty of people who make it their business to profit.

F: There's always a few lemon drops.

C: At that time, there was a story that his last day at HEW, he was apparently receiving [the press]. He was very popular with the press--John Gardner was--and he received all of these reporters, and he said there was no call from the White House. Well, actually, the dinner had been given for him, and he had had this White House ceremony. I don't think anybody had really got a focus that this was his last day in office, but the formal things had all been done.

F: Did the press ever sort of reject you as having gone wrong? I mean, is there that kind of feeling when someone leaves either the sort of central press, or even the peripheral press, and moves into government service, that this fellow has somehow violated the sanctitude and gone over to the enemy? Or are they glad to see a man make good? It can't help but change the role.

C: I have never been a sort of member of the pack. I was a journalist working for a magazine; I had been peripheral press. I had close friends in the press corps. They always treated me at arm's length. I think they never could quite put their finger on me. They never wrote about me. I was the most . . . .

F: You had an awfully low profile, to use a modern cliché.

C: Yes. And I know they did that despite the fact that Johnson, on occasion, would make an effort to raise my profile. I very rarely did. I discovered that it was not too healthy to have a high profile around Johnson, that he really, whether he said it or not, didn't like you being in the newspapers all the time. The press rarely [singled me out]. At the signing of the International Education Act, Johnson singled me out at this signing ceremony and praised me.

F: You went on that trip to Southeast Asia, you mean? Is that the one, that signing in Thailand?

C: Well, wait a minute. We must have had two signings of that act.

F: You, maybe, had one at home and one abroad?

C: This was in the East. I was not there in Thailand. I didn't go on that trip.

F: Maybe you had another one. I'll have to check that out.

C: That's interesting because I'm sure it was the International Education Act. And I think it was either Johnny Apple, or one of the ***New York Times*** people in the news story [who] had included that the President had singled me out and that this was very unusual that the White House assistant should ever be singled out by the President on something like this. But that was one of the few times, and there were never any stories about what was my role in the White House or any of that kind of thing. And I used to have some personal resentment that a lot of the things that I was carrying the water on, the press would blithely assign to Moyers or Valenti as being the [person].

As you know, Johnson treated us all as equals, and we all had direct access to him. There was no hierarchy in this, where I had to go to Valenti or Moyers to deal with him. I remember the very week that there was a story by [Tom] Wicker saying that Moyers was responsible for most of the substantive programs that at a staff meeting, the President had somewhat embarrassed me, chewing out the staff for not submitting more ideas to him. He was always hungry for ideas. He said that, "Doug Cater has given me more ideas than all of the rest of you guys put together." And so he had specifically praised me the same week that Wicker was . . . .

But the press creates these awful stereotypes about the way the White House staff system works. They assign stereotype roles, and they never could quite fit me in a stereotype. So as a result, they ignored me. A guy like the chap who wrote the column for Life--

F: Hugh Sidey?

C: Hugh Sidey. He never mentioned me, although frequently he was writing in areas in which I was quite active. I know one time Rowly Evans, who had been an old friend,

called me and said that Senator--the Senator from Pennsylvania--Clark, who was number two under--

F: Joe Clark.

C: --Morse on the Senate Education Subcommittee, had told him at a party that the Higher Education Act would have died if it hadn't been for--that there had been an ego fight between Morse and Adam Powell, in which they really got into quite a struggle of ego, and I went up and began to stroke them both and finally got them to meet together and they worked out their differences. Rowly and I had frequently gone to see Johnson, together, when he was senator and vice president. And he knew that the President knew that we were getting in close; he knew also that the President was down on him. [He] said, "I won't use this if you don't want me to." Of course I had a little bit of the thing where I'd love to have my role glamorized. But I told him, "Well, I wish you wouldn't use it." Because one thing, I didn't think it would help me with Johnson; but secondly, I thought in dealing with senators and congressmen, the more they think they did it all, the better you are the next time you go up. If they think that your role is going to get all the credit in the newspapers . . . .

F: "Why should I do anything for that s.o.b.?"

C: Yes. They become suspicious of you.

F: Morse never did let his anti-Vietnam stand interfere with his support of the education programs?

C: No. And this is interesting, when I would go up--and I had to be with Morse quite a lot, as I did with Powell--he would never even mention Vietnam to me. That was a separate compartment. I didn't have anything to do with it, and he wouldn't get mad about it, unlike some of the other senators with whom I'd had friendly relationships. Frank Church and I had a real little knockdown, at one point, on Vietnam, and he was hostile to me for a long time after that. Fulbright could be quite . . . . He wouldn't keep it in separate compartments. On the International Education Act, for example, he was never strong in support of it. He didn't fight it, but he would say, "What the hell do I care?" He said, "The war in Vietnam is killing everything anyway."

F: Yes. That's the way with Vietnam. Thank you, Doug.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III