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ORVILLE FREEMAN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW III
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ORVILLE L. FREEMAN

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INTERVIEWEE: ORVILLE FREEMAN (TAPE #3)

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

DATE: July 21, 1969

B: This is a continuation of the interview with Orville Freeman.

Sir, to deal with the international applications of the Department of Agriculture, one of the central points here is the use of PL 480, the Food for Peace Plan. From a layman looking from the outside in, it looks like somewhere during your tenure PL 480 changed from a surplus disposal mechanism to an arm of foreign policy, particularly with the self-help feature. When did the self-help idea originate?

F: First of all, I think your question is correct. It did change in its early inception although a few people, then-Senator Humphrey for example and a few others, envisaged the Food for Peace Program as a positive development instrument. Its administration generally until the change of Administration in 1961 was largely a disposal program and sometimes almost a dumping program. There were provisions for investment in agriculture and for economic development, but they were largely ignored and no real pressure was put on them. Also, there was a great concern that in the process of using food and developing agriculture in these countries, we would be creating competition for our own exports. And this was felt very strongly in the Congress. So the potential of these programs in terms of development tool was not given very much attention.

It began to change very early in the--almost immediately I would say, with the advent of President Kennedy. I took a trip around the world in 1961, and the express purpose of it was to see how we could use food more

effectively, accomplishing the twin purposes of feeding hungry people and also providing an important input into the economy. And I continuously felt very strongly that adequate attention was not given to food or to food's potential. As a matter of fact, I felt that up to the very end and said a number of times in my judgment we might very well have found Red China in Viet Nam by now if it hadn't been for their internal food problem, and the fact that they are almost totally dependent on fertilizer which comes from Western Europe and from Japan. If you realize that one pound of fertilizer is at least ten pounds of grain, if that fertilizer was cut off China simply wouldn't be able to feed her people. And I think this was a very basic geopolitical fact of life. On one occasion I was at a party at General Wheeler's home with a number of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. After the meal when we gathered to visit, I made this point, and a number of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were quite impressed with it. They were to come back for further information about it, which incidentally they never did.

So the importance of food was always there. I felt from the very beginning that this program was not keyed in the way it should be; that AID, for example, did not use the food potential or concern itself with it. As a matter of fact, I felt from the very beginning that AID was very poorly organized and very poorly conceived. I wrote a memorandum and presented it at a Cabinet meeting way back in 1961 that AID should be rather than an action agency with an in-house capacity of its own personnel, it ought to be a coordinating-planning kind of an operation delegating to the operating parts of government--the line departments that have the expertise--the actual carrying out of these jobs. I remember bringing up

at that Cabinet [meeting] and everybody listened patiently, and nothing happened at all. That was during the period when supposedly everything was going to be channeled through the State Department, and all the strings were to be pulled together and fit into one place, which sounds good but when you're dealing with programs that are so complicated and cover such a wide swath, as a practical matter that just isn't possible unless you have so much duplication throughout government that it breaks down.

B: I gather a certain amount of conflict with AID was a continuing feature during your tenure.

F: Yes, it was, but really not in a brittle or abrupt manner. I got along very well with all the AID administrators, and particularly with Dave Bell. We developed a concept which now is growing that were called the PASA, the Participating Agency Service Arrangements, which just amounted to a contract, where AID would contract with the Department of Agriculture and with other departments. And our professional people would then go into the field for whatever time was necessary, coordinating with, reporting to and through the AID field team in the State Department, but at the same time being an integral part of the Department of Agriculture reporting directly back and having the backup of the resources within the department. This worked pretty well, but AID people up and down the line didn't usually like it; they had a pride of their own operation, and they wanted an in-house capacity--which they'll never be able to get in my judgment. Because of the very transitory nature of AID, they just can't get the kind of people, they just don't have kind of backing, they don't belong in that business in my judgment in terms of a line operation.

In any event, this was the background. With State, of course, they

had been working closely with Agriculture, acknowledged our function in the commercial area, but they liked to brush us aside any time they could in terms of the political and in terms of anything to do with assistance. And so it was a familiar picture that we had of the domestic agencies-- that most of the departments of government would feel, "Well, you take care of the cows and the pigs and the horses and grow the corn and the wheat and then the less you're seen or heard of, the better we'll like it," which meant that to use the potential of Agriculture and to get a proper opportunity for this vital segment of our economy, we had to fight literally every inch of the way. On rather frequent occasions I'd carry these matters to the President, and on one occasion President Johnson even put out a national security order--I doubt if that has ever been done perhaps in the history of the country--in which I was directed to take charge of this whole problem of famine in India. I think it was in 1966.

B: Before that, sir, what was President Kennedy's reaction to the self-help idea of being associated with the Food for Peace Program?

F: It never surfaced. It was kind of implicit in all of this. Obviously we were trying to help these countries to develop their own economy, and we were trying to use food to feed hungry people, we were also trying to use food as a capital input to pay people on jobs, we were trying to develop the techniques to do this effectively, both the direct use of food and also the use of currency that accumulated through the PL 480 sales. So it was meshed in to the total picture. There was some discussion; I recall being at Palm Beach over the Christmas holiday in 1961 when the suggestion was made by State--Dave Bell was then Director of the Bureau of the Budget and some people were very favorable about it--that

this whole program ought to be elsewhere than in the Department of Agriculture; that at least the control over the program ought to rest in the State Department or in AID.

This would have been consistent with what President Kennedy was trying to do, but he was the first to recognize that it was totally impractical in dealing with the Congress; that we got through this program in effect monies--very substantial sums of monies--that could be used for economic development purposes without the appropriating procedures and without all the trauma that was involved in an AID appropriation. And further that the law was very clear and made specifically so by Congress that this program should be administered in the Department of Agriculture, not in the Department of State, and any time that State would be looking at it acquisitively, a number of key members in both parties in Congress would raise their head and be heard in no uncertain terms. So this continued. But during the Kennedy years, it was an effort to use food more effectively and we worked very, very hard at that, and generally speaking AID and State paid lip-service to it but didn't really go strongly for it. And the thought of making internal agricultural development a condition for Public Law 480, I don't recall ever, ever rising at all.

B: It did become explicit during the Johnson years though.

F: It did become explicit during the Johnson years, and it kind of grew gradually. It was a combination, I think, of the growing feeling which I expressed repeatedly publicly that we've got to get the agriculture of these countries moving because their total economic development depends on their agriculture, and yet they are ignoring their agriculture just as our own State Department and generally AID tended to ignore

agriculture and agriculture development. The truth is that during the first four years anyway, and this would include the first year of the Johnson period, agriculture was downgraded. It's hard to realize when in the last two to three years it had been at the top in terms of priority in economic development. But when I started screaming about it--I don't mean to speak in the first person, but I really did--this fell on cool ears and it was, "Here we hear agriculture again." But in the later years it was entirely different, so it kind of grew. And as the importance began to come into focus, we began to realize that these countries were not using this food effectively, and furthermore that they were getting to depend on this food and not make the kind of investment in their own agriculture as if we would always be there to bail them out and they could put their resources into something else, where perhaps the political pressure would be greater at the time and place.

And as this began to come to the front, it really focused around India. President Johnson was conscious of this need, and he also is a very frugal, practical, down-to-earth man. I think he always asked himself the question in regard to food programs, both domestic and external, and it would perhaps explain some of his actions where food is concerned, "What good is this going to do? After you've given people food and they've had a meal, then so what?" I mean, "How is it going to help them to help themselves? How is it going to help them get out of the problem they face?" And so he began to check rather strongly in this connection, and he felt--and he would call me in on a number of occasions and would comment that the State Department and the people around him in the White House were prepared to give the country away. He didn't mean that the

way it sounds--what he was really saying is that these people weren't very practical, but he would tease them and he would tease me--teasing with a cutting edge in which he was saying in effect, "You just can't give all this away and run around dewey-eyed. You've got to be a little practical as to what it does and what it builds, and we can't keep doing it forever."

B: Did he examine specific programs and then ask you to defend them?

F: Yes. Actually he never really got into that too often, although on occasion that would be done. But he finally felt enough concern about these programs that he would take a program for a particular country that would involve agriculture and other things and he would refuse to allow a PL 480 sale to be made or certain kinds of economic assistance to be made until he had personally cleared it. The result was this was rather laborious and he would sit on them sometimes for extended periods of time.

B: It must have made it rather difficult dealing with the country involved.

F: It made it difficult dealing with the country involved, but it wasn't a bad way, although we were terribly frustrated at the time because we weren't quite sure what he was doing. We didn't know whether he was for these programs or not; whether he was for helping these countries or not; whether he was miffed with them for political reasons or not. And he'd sit on it. In some ways that made it better for us, because we could just say, "Don't talk to me, we just don't know any more than you do," which was the truth.

B: Was this before the self-help feature became explicit by law?

F: Yes. That's why I say it kind of "grew like Topsy," that he had a feeling, and I think he was right, that in many places these programs were not

administered with enough determination to get results; that these countries had come to depend on us and that was not only food, it was other things too; but perhaps more so in food because food was more dramatic and also because we had the food. During most of this period it was to our advantage to move it out. And so he just began to feel it wasn't being done very effectively, so when he'd sit on it no one would know what was happening--neither those countries nor some of us. I must say that in the last analysis in the long-run, I think in almost every instance India was usually the big battleground. He proceeded to authorize, but by the time he authorized the country in question had really been through the sweatbox.

And so the concept of self-help began to grow. It really came into focus when he sent me to Rome at the FAO Convention--or conference--in 1966, I think--it might have been in '65, and with explicit instructions. This is when India was facing that very serious crop failure and potential starvation; he had gotten very excited about this and concerned about it and talked to me about it, and he was not about to permit mass starvation in India. On the other hand, he felt strongly that they should do something about their own agriculture. I had made it clear to him a number of times the year before that these countries were not, that we had not put any muscle on them, so in this instance in effect he sent me to Rome with directions to work out an agreement with the Indian Minister of Agriculture Subramaniam, and we did that. And we literally worked out an agreement and negotiations that ran around three days when we put down specifically what India was going to do with her agriculture; how much she was going to increase her budget; how much she was going to increase

the available foreign exchange; credit; the nature of their program to get new seeds distributed around the country--went into considerable detail. We had about thirty or forty paragraphs. And I insisted that he sign it. This was all done very secretly because if it had been known in India, there would have been political repercussions of hurricane proportions.

B: Was Minister Subramaniam in contact with his government during this?

F: Yes, just exactly how much he was in touch with his government I don't know. He had a pretty wide mandate, and he seemed to be fairly confident that if this did not leak that he could get it through the Cabinet and get it through the Parliament. He was there under the direct orders of the Prime Minister, and they were facing a grave crisis.

B: I was just going to ask if getting an agreement wasn't made easier by the drought and famine.

F: There's no question about it.

B: To put it bluntly, you kind of have them over a barrel there.

F: We had them over a barrel, and we squeezed them, but he didn't object very much to being squeezed. And I found this true with other ministers of agriculture who in the last analysis had had such a difficult time getting any resources from the Finance Minister that they welcomed the fact that there was pressure from outside to help them to get some of the resources they needed.

B: That's why I asked if Subramaniam was in contact with his government, because you're helping him in a sense. His interests are improving agriculture too; the objection would come from elsewhere, you would think.

F: That's right. And it did. And he took it back and he adhered to the time schedule we had set up; it went through the Cabinet; it went through the Parliament. We proceeded then to move the greatest volume of grain

to India that year than any time in history and do it very efficiently, very effectively.

B: And the following year too, I believe.

F: And the following year, too. One of the ironies of this business is if we had done a poor job, it would have been all over the papers because it was a hot issue and because we moved that enormous volume of grain and because India handled it well internally, as well, you hardly heard a thing about it.

B: Did Mr. Johnson continue to have an interest in Indian problems during all of this?

F: Yes, he had an interest in India problems, he had mixed emotions about India, and he would get terribly irritated with India and with India's political position, I don't quote him now, these are my own words, but with the kind of phlegmatic attitude that the Indians had in connection with it. The time that Madam Ghandi was here at one period he had a very strong plus feeling when she left, not so much when she came. He used to tease us a lot, those of us who wanted to help India and felt strongly about helping India of which I was one. I remember when Mrs. Ghandi came and she landed in the White House grounds in the helicopter pad just outside the diplomatic entrance, and they formed a receiving line and a number of us who were there to greet her went through the line and he introduced me to her-- I had known her before then, of course, he said, "Madam Prime Minister, here's another one of your employees, "like he used to tease with a little cutting edge to it because he felt that a number of us were pretty strong pro-India. Then during her official visit here, as I remember very well, there was a very formal dinner party at the Indian Embassy. The President

was slated to be there at the reception, but not for the evening. He came for the reception, had such a good time that he stayed for the evening, even though he was the only one there in street clothes rather than formal dress. He made a great statement that evening, and he and Madam Ghandi got along very splendidly. But then there would be a number of things that would happen in connection with India and its position and its statements that would irritate him.

B: Would these be particularly in relation to the Vietnamese war?

F: That was a part of it, and there were other things too. This would irritate him, for awhile there was not much sense in talking to him about India. But then after a little bit, he'd reflect on it and he'd do the right thing. I can't remember any of these that we felt was really needed where in the last analysis he did not come through, but sometimes it took a lot of time.

B: Does that kind of thing put you in the position of having to guess what mood the President is in on any given occasion?

F: Well, I suppose, although I never thought much about it or worried much about it. It was clear that if he had just taken out after something or somebody and had indicated that he was not for that, there was no sense in trying to go at it for awhile. I can't ever recall trying to find out what his mood was before I took something there. If it had to be taken, I took it. But if I had found out that he had just absolutely said no the day before, I might wait a week to bring it in and hope that maybe he had had a change of heart which he often did.

B: When did you first get called in on agricultural redevelopment for Viet Nam?

F: You know, I don't rightly remember. I think this kind of overlapped in a

sense the Indian thing. He was quite pleased with the arrangement that was worked out and the way that the Indian thing was handled. I just don't remember precisely, but he called me, we talked about this at some length, and he asked me to get together a team--best agriculturists, professionals, in this country, and take them to Viet Nam to review their agriculture and rural development and make a report to him.

B: Was this at the time of the Honolulu conference?

F: It was the time of the Honolulu conference.

B: Was that a rather hurried affair? That is, there had been some indication that the Honolulu conference was rather hastily organized.

F: I've forgotten that. I think maybe it was. I think this was not particularly hasty; I think it is something that I had worked on independent of Honolulu. It wasn't just set up for window dressing in Honolulu, because I didn't have much to do with Honolulu, although we went there. This was, I think, a part of the pacification effort, and I think a part of the President's feeling that frequently agriculture which he recognized as very important did not get the attention that it should. And so this was the reason that he very specifically brought me into that act.

B: There was a time there he was making speeches along the lines of turning the Mekong into another Pedernales.

F: Yes, during that period I think that might have been a part of it. As I say, I haven't gone back through my notes and I really don't remember.

B: I believe you and your team went on to Viet Nam after the Honolulu conference in 1966?

F: That's right. We stopped at the Honolulu conference--I was one of the principals in the discussion that took place there--and then went on to

Viet Nam. Vice President Humphrey came in at that time too. And this team--we covered the country pretty thoroughly; we broke up into different segments, were carefully scheduled, came together and had a day and a night in which we defined what we had observed and then returned and made a full report to the President with a list of objectives, many of which were subsequently carried out.

B: How cooperative did you find the Vietnamese government?

F: Well, I found the Vietnamese government very cooperative up and down the line. I did not, however, get down to the nuts and bolts implementation where the real problems would reside. At the upper level, talking in terms of policy and direction and program, they were very cooperative. As a matter of fact when I went up to Kontum, I went up with then-President Ky. He was going up there for an official affair with Montagnants. We had had an official formal dinner the evening before in the course of which I had mentioned to him that I was going up to Kontum, and so he invited me to go with him. I spent most of a full day with him and I found it most interesting, and came away quite favorably impressed with his intelligence, decisiveness, his patriotism. I think he's a very able young man, a bit abrupt; I think impolitic, impatient, but he has a lot of charisma, a lot of leadership. His communication with those Montagnants people was surprisingly good. After he had gone through this ceremony he walked around an area that was almost the size of a football field that was roped off and shook hands and talked to the Montagnants men and women almost like an American politician on the stump. And did it very well. I've had the feeling ever since that he was being kind of unfairly the target of many of the anti-Viet Nam forces in this country.

B: Did the South Vietnamese have an effective ministry of agriculture?

F: No, they didn't have a very effective ministry at that time. They had a man who they had brought out of--I think out of some credit institution. He was very pleasant, but very cautious. There just wasn't strong and decisive leadership. His successor, when I went back in later time, was better, and they did move along to where they began to do a very effective job. And at the instance of the AID mission and more particularly the PASA team that we had there from the Department of Agriculture, they did a very effective job in 1968 in getting the new rice seeds spread throughout the Delta with excellent results. This was effectively done. So they were beginning to come, but they were tied up in a lot of bureaucratic end-of-the-roads and of course every time they'd get a man who could do anything, he ended up in the army. They were drafting them so rapidly I went to both Thieu and Ky about that. For example, the man who was the head of their agricultural research service was one of the very few Ph.D.'s and a very good scientist, beginning to do an effective job, was drafted. When I talked to them about it, they just said, "Well, we can't make exceptions for anybody." So it was a difficult problem. But I think they were making progress.

B: Did your recommendations include basic reforms like land reforms?

F: We got involved in the land reform thing, both while there, and both Ky and Thieu were anxious to move into it. I must say I think and it would be my observation that they were more anxious and more willing than was our own AID mission and our own State Department people. They seemed progressively afraid of it, and I am not satisfied that it was necessary.

B: That's curious. Do you suppose that's because it had been such a controversial

issue in other areas?

F: Well, it was a number of things, I think. I really think that first of all it was difficult to do. Land that had supposedly been distributed years before had not physically been made available. The problems of cadastral surveys and identification of land were overwhelming, because when anyone went out to try and do it the Viet Cong would murder them. So you had a very practical problem. But basically, I think, our political experts did not feel that land reform was important in Viet Nam. I think they felt that it might even be counterproductive; that many of the forces that were involved in the Saigon government and the areas that were supporting and giving some stability such as it was--that you would pay a heavy price in those areas by a strong move towards land reform. On the other hand, the people that--the Viet Cong in most areas had that land anyway, and so you were just going to give them a confirmed title and you weren't going to change their attitude; and that when they went through it they just really didn't see where there was going to be a great deal gained and conceivably some lost, and you were going to take on a very major kind of problem. I didn't agree with that. And there were several land reform experts, including some from the Department of Agriculture, who made far-ranging proposals, and nothing ever came of it. At one time President Johnson was interested in it, the White House staff was interested in it, but somehow or other it wouldn't move. Bob (?) now the Ambassador to Turkey, was in the White House and went to Viet Nam as the number one civilian guy--I've got a mental block--

B: We can pick it up.

F: He worked hard on this, but when it would get over to Viet Nam it was

stopped. Now, I met Rud Poats, now the Deputy AID administrator, in the lunchroom the other day and there had been some commenting about my expressing something critically about AID and land reform; and he made a great point about telling me land reform is now moving as well as to express irritation at my criticism. But it's my clear recollection that the reason land reform didn't move in Viet Nam was more the failure of our own people to push it than it was the resistance by the South Vietnamese government.

B: Were you ever asked by President Johnson for your advice on the larger issue of the Vietnamese war?

F: No, I was never particularly privy to those discussions that took place almost exclusively in the National Security Council and in his own private meetings with State Department people and others that were directly involved. In terms of the political issues, I was at any number of meetings where they were discussed and reviewed. But in terms of the real hard judgments and evaluations, getting down to cases and specific strategy, I was not privy to that.

B: Did you have an opinion? Could you classify yourself as a "dove" or a "hawk" or any variation in between?

F: You know, these classifications--I think we did the right thing. I suppose if you want to apply labels, I suppose you would say that I was a "hawk," that I felt that what we had done and were doing in Viet Nam was necessary, and that we were going to have to see it through, and that the whole picture in Southeast Asia today would be vastly different if he had not made the decision to go in in 1965 with considerable troops and had allowed the South Vietnamese government to go down. I think that

this would have made a vast difference in Indonesia and in a number of other places--in Singapore; it would have changed the whole picture in that part of the world. So I felt that what was done was necessary.

I don't know. The allegations that only history will determine, such as the one that was in the paper the other day, that the head of the United Nations--

B: U Thant?

F: Yes, U Thant. That U Thant contended that he had had a personal handwritten communication with Hanoi and with Ho Chi Minh, and that that had never reached the President when it had been sent to the State Department. And the allegations of some people, and frankly some people in very high places and some people that were in Paris that President Johnson sent there, that there were missed opportunities when there could have been a negotiated settlement during those years--I think that's going to be historically the controversy. And I don't know whether there were or whether there were not except my observation would be that I can't believe that the State Department did not report fully to the President because I don't think he would have tolerated that for a minute. And he wasn't the kind of a man to be hoodwinked easily.

B: I think we'll be a long time straightening all of that out. Did the war affect the Department of Agriculture in other ways such as budgetary--?

F: I don't think so. We all had the budget problems and the President, as I think I've related, was very tough-minded about it and about the Administration and about trying to be very effective in your Administration. But I don't think it had any particular adverse effects at that time on our budget.

B: Sir, it's eleven o'clock. Is there anything else that should be added to the international aspects?

F: I think that covers most of it. I would just add this. There was during this period a very interesting development. First of all, when I became Secretary of Agriculture we were faced with enormous surpluses in the United States and very significant amounts of grain around the world. And so the problem was disposal, trying to get some kind of balance. Then we moved within the next four years until we got up to '65 and into '66 to a period where most of the grain reserves in the world had been exhausted, and the world began to be keenly aware of the problem of population expansion. It was at this point that we began to see a change in attitudes in many places in connection with our economic development program and in particular our agricultural program, because we now were in a position where it looked like--and we did face a very critical danger that there could be famine in the world and another year or two of the India famine and a bad crop year in the United States could literally have meant that there would have been famine in the world at that point. This was the point where I increased acreage allotment for domestic production so that wouldn't happen.

So the result of this was a focus in the minds of even the enemies and the strong opponents of economic development and of build agriculture in the developing countries. This made such an impact that it changed the attitude in Congress very strongly. And there was realization that the agriculture in these countries did need to grow, that we couldn't tolerate famine, and that if it was going to grow we just had to run some risk in connection with our own trade. Well, then that turned

around very quickly again, almost within a year. And in 1967 and '68, particularly '68, there were just bumper harvests worldwide. And then of course with the advent of the new seeds there was a much more positive prospect. So what you had was a period of emotional involvement and "get rid of those surpluses." Then you had a period of concern with shortage and facing up to actual famine. Then you revert right back again to a period of heavy grain carryover. And of course this very year at this very moment the International Wheat Agreement appears to be breaking down. Canada is having a very difficult time, and I noted that the Canadian Prime Minister was getting pilloried in the western provinces in Canada. So you went that circle.

B: Ironically, there was a time in 1967, I believe, when there was some furor here over European over-production and alleged dumping on the American market.

F: There always has been a concern where the dairy products are concerned. We had to move in twice and impose Section 202 quotas, which are consistent with our obligations to GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades] because they were subsidizing production and subsidizing exports and were trying to move dairy products in here at a price that was far below their cost of production which was not tolerable. So it bounced up and down, but before we got through I was doing pretty well with the Congress; particularly the Appropriations Subcommittee with Jamie Whitten as the chairman was the tough one. He was deeply concerned with agricultural exports. He watched like a hawk if our economic assistance in any way resulted in production that competed with our production. He didn't want the Agriculture Department involved in this. But I succeeded in getting the International Agriculture Development Service set up, it was funded

through AID, but it was the arm that made self-help practical so we could go out and determine what a country should do and then observe and monitor it and let them know that if they did not live up to that, it would have a serious effect on their request for an extension of that program. And he finally sat still for that.

And then in the latter years we began to make considerable investments in research in some of these countries, beginning to use funds, PL 480 funds for agricultural research, even in areas that would be competitive. And I worked with him over the years quite strongly making the point which can be documented, I think, quite effectively that only as agriculture grows in these countries will they grow and when that happens and their economy begins to improve, their imports of American agricultural commodities will grow very significantly.

B: The possibility of worldwide famine must have impressed you personally very deeply. You wrote a book about it this last year.

F: It did. And it was a harrowing experience. I increased the acreage allotment on wheat, and I looked at those figures and the worldwide figures came in, and I realized that if there should be a bad harvest that we could be as a world in a very critical position. On the other hand, I realized that if this increased and there was not that it would have an adverse effect on price. And there was not very much support among the farm organizations for increasing it. The first increase they welcomed, they wanted to plant more, but the second increase they were chary of. The Congress reflected this. I had the farm organizations in, I had the Congress in. I went over these figures with them. I had tacit support finally for going ahead, but when crops were pretty good and the

prices dropped, any of those erstwhile supporters departed for Siberia or somewhere. There were none of them around when the wolves started baying at my gate.

B: But you survived.

F: I survived. As a matter of fact, while this was going on and then while we had a lot of real adverse comment and attacks at one period, I remember so well with President Johnson that they were attacking me pretty vigorously because I was being accused of having taken some actions that were an effort to hold back inflation but might have an adverse effect on farm prices. It had to do with a letter I'd written to Bob McNamara; it had to do with a statement that I had taken about prices--it was lifted out of context by a reporter and used widely, and I was really getting the business. We were at a reception of some kind in the Supreme Court Building--I remember it very well. The President came over and said to me, "Don't let them bother you. Don't forget, I'm the one that marks your report card," which was reassuring.

B: That sounds like a good note to end on.

F: Okay.