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GEORGE REEDY ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW IX
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George E. Reedy
Donor

February 27, 1984
Date

Robert M. Warner
Archivist of the United States

March 15, 1984
Date

INTERVIEW IX

DATE: August 17, 1983

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Reedy's office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 3

G: --with the idea that we can go back and backtrack and cover some more of the legislative issues at a different time.

R: Well, the problems which we encountered at Chicago had already begun before we went to Chicago, and I trace a lot of them to that session that we discussed in our earlier meeting where he was so rude and loutish to the members of the labor-liberal coalition. Because as far as they were concerned, the sole purpose of the campaign was not to make Lyndon Johnson president; they didn't have any desire to do that. The purpose of the campaign was to keep the Texas delegation out of Shivers' hands, and once that had been accomplished, then they were ready to fly off in all sorts of different directions, I think mostly to Adlai Stevenson. Now, I think that if he had been a bit more gracious in his treatment of them, they would have been more gracious in their treatment of him. But what happened is that for all practical purposes, they went to Chicago as two antagonistic factions. Now, he still had a majority of the Texas delegation, because he had had control or reasonable control over the convention up to the point where the delegates to the national convention were elected. But it was a relatively slim majority, as I remember, and of course it really

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didn't matter much anyway, as nobody took his campaign seriously as a campaign for the presidency.

G: Did he take it seriously?

R: No.

G: Well, he did say, he kept saying that he was serious about running for president. I just wonder if this was simply a retort to Shivers, who kept saying that LBJ was not serious.

R: It was partially that, but also I think it may have flowed partially from some advice I had given him, which was that if he didn't handle himself very carefully he was going to fall under the accusation of being nothing but a stalking horse for Adlai Stevenson, which would have been a very, very bad thing indeed. Therefore he had to treat his appearance at the convention as being a serious appearance; there had to be an actual placing him in nomination, which a lot of people did not want to do; they wanted to take it as a typical favorite son nomination. I got together with some of the House members--Tiger [Olin] Teague is the main one I remember and two or three others--and we agreed there had to be some kind of a demonstration, which wasn't too hard to do because a lot of people are willing to join in a demonstration just because they're tired of sitting there. So several state banners joined when he was placed in nomination; they danced up and down and hurrahed and what have you, a respectable one.

G: How was the decision made to have John Connally give the nominating speech?

R: That involved a number of complications. First of all, I know my own thinking originally had been that we should get someone with some national prestige, and probably at that particular point Wright Patman was about the best we had. I mean when you say national prestige, all I can say is he was better known than Spiro Agnew. But nevertheless, he did have some national prestige, particularly with small business. But as time went on, it became more and more apparent that he had to have someone who could really deliver a speech because there wasn't much point to it otherwise. [Someone] who could put some fire and some conviction in it, and Wright Patman certainly could not make a speech to a convention. Wright was awfully good down in Texarkana but not when it came to addressing a nationwide audience, and John Connally was very good at it.

G: Was there any problem with Connally because of his lobbying efforts for the natural gas bill?

R: Yes, there was a problem there, but in the political world there are always problems and what one does is to balance off the various factors. You know, political decisions are made by what the law would refer to as a preponderance of evidence rather than by conclusive factors. And everything put together it was still best to have John make it.

G: Was there any effort to get any of the other delegations to go along with LBJ aside from the demonstration?

R: No, none whatsoever. Only for the demonstration. Oh, I wouldn't be surprised if some individual members of the Texas delegation who were

taking it seriously may not have gone out and tried to get a few others. They might even have snagged a few for all I know. If you get into a convention, you're always going to discover some oddballs here and there who are dissatisfied with the trend of their own delegation and will sometimes cast a vote for somebody else just to dissent. But certainly there were no serious efforts and certainly nothing sparked by him. He was not interested that year in the vice presidency. I don't think he was ever particularly interested in the vice presidency, but he certainly wasn't interested in the vice presidency and he certainly did not believe that he had a chance at getting the presidential nomination, which he didn't.

G: One of the speculations was that he was more than a favorite son because his favorite son candidacy held on longer than a normal favorite son candidacy.

R: No. No. That's a misinterpretation of the factors that were at play. See, in one sense he was more than a favorite son. One of the problems with American politics is that almost everybody that analyzes it analyzes it in terms of the presidency, whether we're heading toward the presidency or moving away from it. There's a tendency to forget that American politics are much more complex, and he was a national figure, there was no question about that. He was and would have been a national figure even if he had never gotten anywhere near the presidency, just as Sam Rayburn was a national figure without getting anywhere near the presidency.

But what really happened was this: once we got to Chicago there were a series of candidates, none of whom could be embraced. One could not embrace Stevenson without creating irrevocable splits in the Democratic Party. Most of the other candidates that year were really rather ridiculous. You certainly couldn't go to [Averell] Harriman. I don't think Bob Kerr had as many votes as he [LBJ] had, although Bob Kerr technically had Nebraska as well as Oklahoma. So what had to be done in his case was to hang onto his candidacy to the bitter end so that after the thing was over he would not have to go back to Texas and face the problem of patching up wounds. Nobody was going to fault him for hanging onto his own candidacy, but if he moved in any other direction, then there was certainly going to be some kind of recriminations.

Now, the way the thing worked was rather interesting. There were a series of moves--he was very, very happy when the thing was over, by the way. I'll never forget the look on his face when he no longer had to hang onto that candidacy, because he knew the thing was totally artificial. And we got into the question of the vice presidency. That was a much more interesting factor than the presidential race. The presidential thing was cut and dried before we got there. There wasn't any doubt.

G: Did he use that position as favorite son candidate to try to get some leverage in terms of the platform or the vice presidential selection?

R: No, because there wasn't any leverage. He didn't have any leverage out of that. There wasn't any leverage out of being a favorite son.

G: All right. Aside from the candidacy itself--

R: Let me add to that thought, by the way, so you'll understand it very clearly. The only possible nominee of that convention was Adlai Stevenson. If there had been two candidates, both of whom had a chance, then there might have been some leverage in his favorite son position. But as long as there was only one real honest to God candidate, and all the others were God knows what, then there was no leverage whatsoever for anything.

G: Well, let's talk about the vice presidential nomination.

R: Yes, that's much more interesting. It's one of the most unusual episodes I have ever seen in all of my experience in politics. After the nomination, Adlai called in all of the leaders: Johnson, Rayburn, the whole crew.

G: Was that when they met at the Stockyards Inn?

R: Probably. I'm not clear where they met, because I wasn't there, of course, but I heard about it from Johnson. It was one of those weird things where Adlai turns to Rayburn first, as the senior man, and says, "Who should I select for vice president?" and Rayburn's response is "For the love of Christ, just name him and we'll go out and nominate him for you." And Johnson said about the same thing. Right down the line, they all [did], because nobody wants a fight over the vice presidency. That's the worst thing you can have at a convention. Everybody wants the candidate to name him and they'll go out and nominate him. And to everybody's absolute shock and amazement, Stevenson decided that he was going to throw the thing open to the

floor. Oh, my God, you could feel the shock wave all through that convention!

Jim Rowe and I were standing in the corridor of the hotel near the Lyndon Johnson headquarters, and we were talking to each other in almost a dazed fashion, like you know, has he lost his ever-loving mind? I think that's the depth of the intelligence. And a man came running up to us, his face absolutely distorted. Neither Jim nor I recognized him. His eyes were glittering. He was mumbling out something that sounded like "Where is Lyndon? Where is Lyndon? Where is Lyndon? Adlai's thrown this open, and I think I've got a chance for it if I can only get Texas. Where is Lyndon?" And we suddenly realized we were talking to Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee, who both Jim and I had known and known well for at least twenty years and we didn't recognize him. It's the most--

G: Why didn't you recognize him?

R: Because his face was so distorted. I have never seen before or since such a complete, total example of a man so completely and absolutely wild with ambition, it had literally changed his features. Well, of course, both Jim and I realized immediately that it was a godsend. We quickly pointed him toward the Lyndon Johnson door, and both Jim and I went back to--we shared a room with twin beds, and we just collapsed on our beds laughing. I remember my sides aching. It was unbelievable to both of us.

Now, you see the situation was this. It was very obvious as soon as the nomination was thrown open that Estes Kefauver was going to get

it, for all kinds of reasons. I don't have to go into that. I think mostly because he had California behind him. Now, of all of the various candidates involved, the one that was going to cause the most trouble from Lyndon Johnson's standpoint was Estes Kefauver. Estes was very unpopular in most of Texas and even more unpopular in other parts of the South. There were some parts of Texas where he could be fairly popular, and during the campaign we took him there. We took him down to Waco because in that old Cotton Belt the Estes brand of populism would go over pretty big, but it certainly wouldn't have gone over in East Texas. It certainly wouldn't have gone over anywhere else.

So there was a little problem here, that was to avoid a commitment to Kefauver. I mean, you can't just vote against a man, you've got to have somebody to vote for. And here was Albert Gore. Same state, a rather conservative man. One of the strange myths of this idea that Gore was a liberal, I think that flows out of a misapprehension by most northerners that anybody out of Tennessee wearing shoes must be a liberal, because they're so accustomed to the wild men coming from Tennessee. Albert was quite acceptable in the South, and yet he was not a deep dark-dyed southern racist or anything like that. From our standpoint it was sort of a neutral thing. And also, the brand of populism embraced by Albert Gore was a brand that was pretty popular in Texas. It was like manna from heaven. We greeted Albert Gore the way Custer would have greeted another regiment at the battle of the Little Big Horn. And that swung Texas. Lyndon was able to

swing Texas fully behind Gore, for the second ballot. But the second ballot eliminated Gore.

Now by that time--you see our position shifted with each one. With Gore eliminated, then the various members of the delegation had to really start looking at their hole cards, and there was only one possibility of defeating Kefauver. I knew there wasn't any possibility, really; I knew that and so did Johnson know that. But there was only one thing that could look like a possibility of defeating Kefauver, and that was to get behind Jack Kennedy. So Johnson got the Texas delegation behind Jack Kennedy, which could not have been done if there had not been the first vote for Gore. One of the features of politics is that when you start out, people always assume they have a lot of choices and they'll always tell you about all the things they will not do. If it hadn't been for the Gore thing, about three-quarters of the Texas delegation would have told you they could not come out for a Roman Catholic Irish [vice] president. But once it became clear that it was Kennedy or Kefauver, then it was possible to swing the whole delegation behind Kennedy. And of course the Kennedy thing was pretty close.

G: Yes. How was the balloting done in the caucus of the Texas delegation?

R: How do you mean?

G: Well, how did the delegation actually decide on Kennedy?

R: We had a meeting, a caucus, and the caucus was really rather ridiculous.

G: Was Rayburn chairing it?

R: I've forgotten who chaired it. It didn't matter. No, Johnson chaired it; Johnson was chairman of the delegation. It was really rather ridiculous. You're supposed to have a caucus. Well, my God, what they had in the basement of the armory, they had partitions which were higher than one's head, and what the press merely did was to bring up chairs to the partition and look over the partition. They could see everything that was going on. I kicked one United Press reporter out, an old girl that I knew very well who had walked in. Nobody was quite sure she was a delegate or not, but I was rather amused by the whole process because everybody was up there taking notes of everything Johnson had to say. I remember one of the Latin delegates from South Texas--I've forgotten who it was now--he got up and made an impassioned speech for Kennedy. And by that time, as I said, with the rest of the delegates, the anti-Catholic delegates, looking down the barrel of the rifle, realizing it was Kefauver or Kennedy, decided they'd take the handmaid to the Pope rather than Estes Kefauver. That's how unpopular Kefauver was.

So after that, see, that settled it. We were able to get through the whole thing without being placed in the spot of having to vote for Kefauver. We always had an alternative, which is what we were looking for, and an alternative that wasn't going to divide the Texas delegation too heavily. So what happened is that from Johnson's standpoint the thing really ended very well.

G: Was there any communication between Johnson and Joe Kennedy about--?

R: Could well have been, but I don't think so. I don't think so. Because there would have been no need for it. The vote for Kennedy was not a deal; the vote for Kennedy was on the old slogan of "any port in a storm," and he was the only available port. There was no place else to go.

G: There's been some suggestion that in these state delegation caucuses that Johnson and Rayburn pretty much just ramrodded through first Gore and then Kennedy, that there really weren't any formal votes. It was mainly a question of "all in favor of Kennedy" and then yell and then down.

R: Well, that's about right, but to say they ramrodded it through is totally to misread the situation. There was literally no place else to go.

G: Did the labor-liberal people at the convention from the Texas delegation favor Kennedy over Kefauver?

R: Oh, sure. Or at least let me put it this way, the labor-liberal people at the convention were not as opposed to Kefauver--the labor people were not as opposed to Kefauver as were some of the others. But they all recognized the impossible situation that a vote for Kefauver would have placed the Texas delegation in. It would have been simply impossible to have.

G: Now, it's my understanding that on one of the ballots, maybe the one for vice president, Texas never made it unanimous. And Rayburn, who was chairing the convention, refused to recognize John Connally, who

would have switched the votes to make it unanimous. Do you have any recollection of that?

R: No, I don't, and I doubt if we switched it to make it unanimous either.

G: Was Rayburn pleased with the way things had gone?

R: Pleased in the sense that if one in advance of the convention had carefully scrutinized all of the vectors involved and come up with the best outcome that could possibly emerge from the situation, this was it.

G: I have a couple of memos here on the convention that I want to show you.

R: I wonder who wrote this. Who did I call? I've forgotten who I called, but that represents the situation.

G: With regard to the platform, the Democratic platform, what was Johnson's position on the civil rights plank there?

R: I've really forgotten. It's not terribly important because what he was trying to do was to get through without having to make any commitments one way or the other. The language that Russell suggested was the type of language that best did it.

G: Were there any discussions between Johnson and Stevenson about the platform?

R: Not that I know of.

G: In addition, there's some indication that Johnson favored Jim Rowe for Democratic national chairman.

R: Oh, Jim wouldn't have taken it. Jim wouldn't have taken it if it had been offered to him. Jim and I shared a room together at that convention. I knew exactly what he was thinking; he knew exactly what I was thinking. Oh, Jim would never have gone for that.

G: He did go on Stevenson's payroll shortly after the convention.

R: Oh, sure.

G: Why was that?

R: Because Jim is a professional political operator who simply cannot stay away from a campaign. That had nothing to do with Johnson whatsoever. Jim is like an old war horse. My God! You blow the bugle and he's up and rearing to plunge into battle. Jim cannot stay out of a political campaign. He's psychologically incapable--was psychologically incapable. Things may have changed since his heart attack.

So let me go back to the platform for a second, because there's a rather basic point involved that most people misunderstand. There is a very widespread tendency in the United States to think of political platforms as a guide to what the party will do if it gets elected and to assume that the purpose of the platform is to tell people "this is what we stand for, and if we get into office this is the kind of government you can expect." And that is not the purpose of a political platform. That may be what it was designed to accomplish, but in reality it cannot serve that purpose under the American system. This again is a confusion that many Americans have between the American structure of politics and the British structure of politics. In the British structure that's what a platform is. It tells you what a

political party will do or will try to do if it gets elected. What the platform actually does in the United States is to determine the nature of the political party for that particular campaign and nothing else.

You see, in the American system, political parties as political parties really do not exist in between elections. In between elections what the Democratic Party is is an office in Washington scrambling desperately to pay off the debts of the last election and getting set for the next convention. It has no political role whatsoever. It's merely a fund-raising office. The big meetings they hold, the national committeemen, that's just a way of getting people together so you can keep in touch and be ready to go. Now, consequently when people get together for a platform, what they are really doing is reconstituting the party for that year. In other words, the party has been dead for four years; it's like phoenix, it has to rise out of the ashes again.

So when you meet at the national convention, you know what you're meeting [for] is to form a coalition for a particular campaign, and you have to decide who's in that coalition and who is out of that coalition, and the various political planks of that platform are really designed to determine the boundaries of the coalition for that year. I'm not saying that this is the way people think of it, because again, even very experienced politicians have been caught up in this myth, mostly perpetrated by Woodrow Wilson, that that's the purpose of the political platform, and therefore it is treated rather cynically by the public because the public looks at it and they see that after

the campaign everybody forgets about it. But the point is the platform has accomplished its purpose the moment it's adopted. It's one of the most important things they do at the convention, but after they've done it, that's the end of it. You might as well get rid of it, because they've decided then who's in and who's out. And those platform planks are not drawn up as a guide to action; they are drawn up for exclusionary and inclusionary purposes.

Now, consequently when somebody like Johnson, who understood this instinctively, and Russell, who understood it instinctively, even though they might not be able to articulate it the way I could, they would not sit down and say, "Am I for or against this plank?" In fact, I don't think any politician would that really understood what he was doing. Instead the question is, "Can I live with this, or is this so bad I've got to walk out?" That is the whole point. So an awful lot of the speculation that arises over whether somebody was for this plank or against this plank is totally irrelevant. It's got nothing to do with anything. Whether they're for or against it, my God, that's like saying are you for or against the cross-stitch, or are you for or against tatting. It's a total irrelevancy. The point is, can you live with it? And that's what people like Johnson and Russell and Kerr and Rayburn, and for that matter [John] McCormack and Tip O'Neill, that's how they look at a platform, can I live with this? And they want to get the broadest possible thing they can that they can live with. I'm giving you that generalization because I think it may clear up an awful lot of questions.

G: Going back to one more question on the vice presidential nomination. What was Johnson's reaction to Stevenson's decision to throw it open?

R: Incredulity.

G: Did you talk to him after that?

R: Yes, but Johnson never discussed things like that. This is one of the problems you're going to have with almost anyone that you interview on Johnson. He was not the kind of man that after that kind of an action would start speculating on why it happened. His conversation would be entirely "for the love of God, the ox is in the ditch. What do we do now?" I never heard any degree of speculation over why it happened. The most speculation I heard was me and Jim Rowe talking together that day up in the corridor.

G: Did he see this as a reflection of Stevenson's weakness?

R: It bothered both him and Rayburn, because it indicated to them a lack of professionalism, a sort of an amateurish approach to the political system. Let me again go into a generalization. The real reason that vice presidents are selected as a rule is not because of their attractiveness to the electorate. That's another misunderstanding in the American political system. It's because the process of selecting a president has left a lot of animosity in its wake. You know, after all, people are really bitter when it comes to fighting for that nomination, and whoever gets the nomination has an immediate problem and that is to somehow pull the party together, because there's only a month or so, only a couple of weeks before the campaign begins. And if you don't have a political party behind you, even though the

political party is not going to be too much of a factor in the campaign itself, if you can't unite that party, you sure as hell are not going to get enough votes to win the election.

So the real factor involved in selecting a vice president is to find one that can patch up those wounds. If you take a very careful look at how vice presidents have been selected, ever since 1804 when we went to the straight party ticket--before that, of course, the second highest number of votes got the vice presidency--but if you go back and examine, what you're going to discover is that while the vice president may not have brought one vote to the ticket, he did as a rule succeed in patching up. So to both Rayburn and Johnson I would think the immediate reaction would be "for the love of God, what's wrong with this guy?" The battle for the vice presidency will merely perpetuate all of the bloodletting that went on in the battle for the presidential nomination."

Actually in my own judgment, looking upon it in retrospect, I think that Kefauver was probably about as good as he could have done. He wasn't going to win the election that year anyway. He couldn't have won the election if we'd had Paul Butler counting the ballots. Kefauver was in a peculiar position. He was sort of the darling of the liberals, much more so than Stevenson. Stevenson was really a rather conservative man, much more conservative than Johnson in his politics. Oh, much more. He just happened to be from an area of the country where he didn't have the pressures of an oil constituency. If it hadn't been for that Johnson would have looked like he was about

sixty degrees to the left of Adlai. And Adlai had a number of rather peculiar things. He had to worry about the South and he had to worry about the far-out liberals. Kefauver, even though Kefauver was unpopular with the southern politicians, I'm not so sure that he was unpopular with the southern voters, which was a different thing. So I believe that--and since then I have wondered in my own mind, and I have seen a lot of speculation, as to whether throwing the thing open wasn't just a clever ploy on Stevenson's part, because when one adds up all of the vectors at that convention they had to come out with Kefauver. Jack Kennedy was the only possible joker in the deck, and a little bit late for that one I think, because Kennedy hadn't campaigned enough for it in advance.

G: Right in the middle of the convention I guess Johnson and Rayburn flew to Washington for a meeting with the President about the Suez crisis. Do you remember that?

R: Oh, vaguely. There was always a Suez crisis in those days. It got to the point I wouldn't even wake up for a Suez crisis.

G: Is there anything on that meeting that was significant?

R: No. You know, there is a certain point where crises can become routine, and that was one of them.

G: Okay. After the convention Johnson met with--oh, before we get to that.

(Interruption)

Here's another memo dealing with Johnson's press conference, I guess, or press relations. Do you remember that occasion?

R: Yes, I remember it well, very well. It really was. It was an extraordinary performance on his part. What day was that? [August 12, 1956] What had happened just before that? I remember--the press conference itself didn't say very much. It didn't produce any headlines because no headlines could be produced. But for some reason he was more at home with the press at that particular point than any other time I've ever seen him. Because you know this is a fairly impressive list, Martin Agronsky, Popham, Walter Mansell, Paul Scott--who's a real nut; that's a little bit harsh, he's quite fanatical--Bill Stringer, Ray Brooks, Ray Lahr, Sarah McClendon, John Edwards, Griffing Bancroft, Bill Carter, John Steele. It was just a memo because I thought he ought to know that this is the way he ought to handle himself at every press conference. There was no other reason for it.

G: Do you recall what he did that was so impressive?

R: No, it wasn't what he did, it was his manner. He was easy. He was relaxed. He seemed to be very frank and very candid. Since there was so little he could possibly say I didn't pay any attention to the content. Now what could he say?

G: After the convention Johnson met with Stevenson, Kefauver and others at Santa Fe.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that trip?

R: Yes, I wasn't on it--I don't think I was on it anyway--but I remember it. It was mostly to discuss strategy. And of course one of the big

problems was Texas, and, boy, was that a problem, because neither Kefauver nor Stevenson were very popular in Texas. And to compound the situation, as unpopular as Kefauver was, he was still a better campaigner in Texas than Adlai was. We had some really very difficult problems. We could at least find a couple of areas where Kefauver would go over big, mostly in the old Cotton Belt, up in that little town of West, Texas, which has a Czechoslovakian population. We took him to the Heart of Texas Fair at Waco and a few places like that where I think he would actually make some votes. And I think that if we could have found the right circumstances to have brought him over to East Texas, I think he might have made some votes there, too, but that was a little bit complicated.

But see, your major problem is obviously a state like Texas, which is terribly important. After all, it's got a hell of a lot of electoral votes out of Texas. You cannot avoid bringing the presidential candidate in; we had to bring Stevenson in. Lord, that was a complex matter. Especially because of Stevenson's stand on the tidelands, which was still a highly emotional, supercharged issue in Texas, not quite as emotional as it had been in 1952 but still emotional.

G: Shivers and the Republicans seemed to have really underscored that issue during the Stevenson campaign.

R: Well, it was <u>the</u> issue. You see, the issue was originally made by Price Daniel, who was attorney general of Texas and he was running for something, so he ran into it. Price did a very good job of connecting

it with the Treaty Oak and San Jacinto and everything else. The issue was the most ridiculous that has ever hit Washington, D.C. To this day they have not found one drop of oil under those lands. Of course, it's also one of those conundrums. Again, if you back off and take a look at the issue merely as an intellectual puzzle, what you're going to come up with is the realization that both sides were right. That Texas was absolutely right when it claimed those three marine leagues, and the United States was absolutely right when it said Texas didn't have any right to those three marine leagues. You know, there are some things like that, and usually those things develop because the problem itself involves something meaningless. And it was meaningless. They were talking about ten and a half miles of salt water.

I think that in a sense--let me back up again for another generalization about politics. Sometimes an issue which in and of itself is a little bit silly, will become a very major dominating issue because what it is is a catalyst for a lot of other issues that are really in people's minds and have some substance to them but cannot be expressed in simple terms. And I think at that particular point, Texas was beginning to suffer from a feeling that it was looked down upon by the rest of the nation. That you had all of these eastern liberal snobs up in Washington and New York and places like that looking at Texans through a monocle, with a sneer on their lips. This is mostly because in my judgment--this is an interpretation on my part; naturally there's no way in the world I could prove it--but I think it was because of the heavy load of oil in Texas politics. And

the northern liberals had discovered that the one crusade that they had that was really effective was the crusade against oil. All sorts of reasons for that, but that's irrelevant. And in a sense I think that Texans were looking for something to crystallize their resentments against the prevailing political moods of the time.

Now here was an issue that may have been a very foolish issue. The concept of how many angels can dance on the point of a pin is much more intelligent than this. But it was a peculiarly Texas issue. It rested on the fact that Texas had been a nation. You're familiar with the background of it, aren't you? That Texas had been a nation, that it entered the United States under a treaty. It was not hauled in or dragged in; it came in of its own free will and volition, and it signed a treaty. Now that doesn't mean that if I walk down Congress Avenue in Austin and asked a hundred people about the constitution or the treaty they would have known about it. But nevertheless, most literate people knew about it, and therefore they were capable of seizing upon an issue here which sort of pitted Texas against the rest of the world. They could carry their heads high, "My God, we're not like the rest of you people. You didn't enter the United States voluntarily, you were brought in one way or the other. We came in of our own free will and volition."

What I think they were doing--oh, of course they buttered up the tidelands issue. I'll never forget the huge headline I saw in the Houston Post once on how there was a hundred and eighty billion dollars worth of oil under the submerged lands, and the speculation what

this would mean to the Texas school fund. Of course, when I read the story what I discovered was they were talking about the submerged lands all the way out to the continental shelf, which goes out a hundred and twenty miles or so. They weren't talking about the three marine leagues that are in Texas. And it was one of those extrapolations anyway that geologists are so fond of. They'd measured the amount of oil inland and then just measured the salt domes going out to the continental shelf.

But again, I think that what the tidelands issue really was was a very potent catalyst to galvanize all of the resentments that so many Texans had against the rest of the country. You can get things like that. I remember when I was a kid in Chicago, Big Bill Thompson ran for mayor on the grounds that if they'd elect him mayor of Chicago he'd punch King George on the snoot. He said it: "I'd take the first boat to England and punch King George on the snoot." Absolutely ridiculous. But not so ridiculous if you realize the conditions under which people lived in Chicago. It was an era of intense ethnic discrimination. They associated ethnic discrimination with the WASPs, whom again they associated with England. What Big Bill was really doing was cocking a snook at all the people who were looking down their nose at the Jews, the dagos, the wops, the micks, the honkies, that sort of thing. I think the tidelands issue was like that. One difficulty was you couldn't possibly be against it. How in the hell could you oppose it if you were a Texan?

G: Yes. How actively did Johnson campaign for Stevenson and Kefauver?

R: Well, I don't know, that's difficult. It's like saying how long should a man's legs be or how many hairs make a beard. I think he campaigned for them as actively as anyone could, or at least he organized as effective a campaign for them as could be organized.

G: The liberals and some of the members of the press charged that his support of the ticket was very insipid.

R: Well, again, how high is up? How hot is hot? How cold is cold? I think myself that in view of all the conditions he did the only things that might have produced any votes. Because you have to realize a very important factor, and that is that Stevenson's campaigning--not Kefauver's, but Stevenson's campaigning--actually lost votes. Stevenson made two very fundamental errors in the course of that campaign. One was coming out for the nuclear test ban treaty. The other was coming out for the elimination of the draft. Now the reason those were mistakes is that he never mentioned them before, and the worst thing you can do in a campaign is to come up with an issue that you haven't embraced before the campaign began. Because everybody immediately says, "Ah ha, he's just playing politics to get our votes." Any politician that says anything that he didn't say before he got the nomination ought to have his head examined.

I can remember that particular day. He did it all in one week. I remember walking into the Headliners Club, and Walter Prescott Webb was at the bar--he and I were very good friends. And Walter says, "George, this candidate of yours"--I knew something was wrong, he said "this candidate of <u>yours</u>"--"is beginning to sound awful demagogic. I

don't know if I can support him." And I thought, my God, Adlai, if the professors are leaving you who in the hell is left?

Johnson did manage to work out a little bit of salvage for that though. Albert Gore by then had developed a hell of a good speech on nuclear explosions. He could scare the bejesus out of you. He'd get up in front of an audience and he'd start describing what it did to genetics, how it was going to make men impotent, make women unable to bear children, and people would walk out of the thing just white and shaking. So we brought him into Texas to make that speech, and I think that halted some of the erosion.

But when you say that Johnson was lukewarm, it depends upon what you would regard as warm and what you would regard as cold. No, he did not go in money, marbles and chalk, but on the other hand, what good would it have done to go in money, marbles and chalk?

G: Did Stevenson and Kefauver try to get LBJ to campaign more actively for them?

R: No, they were happy with what they got, because I think both of them recognized the reality, that actually all Johnson was doing in Texas was fighting a rear guard action to prevent the loss from being too great. God, you couldn't have beaten Eisenhower in Texas. He was born there for one thing.

G: Johnson seems to have tried to deflect attention away from tidelands by emphasizing conservation projects and water projects.

R: That's all he could do. You know, sometimes when you're on an absolutely losing end of an issue, which we were, the only thing you can

do is try to find something else and see if you can't work up some interest in it. There was just no other tactic. You could not possibly. . . . I don't believe anybody could have stood up in Texas and made a speech supporting Stevenson's position on the tidelands. What you had to say was okay, this is a loser, but look, how about conservation, how about cotton, how about this, that and the other?

G: Another tactic of Johnson's--

Tape 2 of 3

G: Another tactic seems to have been to try to force a commitment out of [Herbert] Brownell and the Eisenhower Administration to back off from the federal efforts to obtain the tidelands.

R: I don't remember that too clearly, because the whole thing was rather futile. Incidentally, are you aware of the fact that when the tidelands issue first arose, Johnson and Rayburn together succeeded in working out a compromise under which the federal government would have received the title to the three marine leagues? But in exchange for that, Texas would have had one-third of the royalties from any of the submerged lands I believe all the way out to the continental shelf. Are you aware of that?

G: Yes.

R: And of course the compromise simply couldn't be sold because Price Daniel and the Texans turned it down flat. So after that both Rayburn and Johnson treated the issue as merely a political nuisance, which was what it was. You know, they had come up with a bit of reality and the bit of reality was rejected, so if people wanted to live in

dreamland, both Johnson and Rayburn were willing to let them live in dreamland. But still, they had to work out ways of living with it.

G: What efforts did Johnson make in the 1956 campaign to keep Price Daniel loyal to the Democratic Party?

R: Oh, I don't think he made many. I don't think he had to really. Price was a very, very conservative man, but he did have some understanding of organizational responsibilities, and I think he realized that it is very, very dangerous to actually cross party lines. And if you do cross party lines in politics, what you have to do is go all the way. You can't do the sort of thing that Shivers did, "Democrats for Eisenhower." You had to just go over and become a Republican, and in Texas that would have been impossible at that time.

G: There was a theme that seems to run through those memoranda to the effect that Johnson and Rayburn were making their support of Daniel conditional on Daniel's support of the national ticket, that they were using some pressure on him to come out firmly in favor of Stevenson and Kefauver.

R: I don't know if they were pressing him, but I think that there are two things involved. One, I think that they probably had that in their minds. But two, they would have to state those conditions in order to preserve their own position. Suppose they had come out without any conditions and supported Price Daniel, and he had suddenly switched over to the other side. Think what a spot that would have put Johnson and Rayburn in. Whereas if they said in advance we're only going to support him as long as he supports the national ticket, then if he

suddenly switches they can say "Well, goodbye Price, good to have known you," and nobody would blame them, but they couldn't say that if they hadn't stated the conditions first. Politics is a very subtle game about some things like that. When you have contingencies arising, you frequently have to state those contingencies in advance.

G: There are a couple of incidents in the campaign I want to ask you about. One was LBJ's introduction of Kefauver at Hillsboro in which he quoted Shivers' endorsement of Eisenhower. There is some question of whether the crowd actually understood what he was doing.

R: I wish I had it in front of me. I sort of remember it, but not very clearly. You don't happen to have a copy of it, do you?

G: No, I'm sorry.

R: I remember it only vaguely. I'd be a little afraid to comment on it right now. I remember it happening, all right.

G: Also, Jack Kennedy came to Texas and spoke at El Paso and Fort Stockton.

R: Oh, sure.

G: Do you remember that?

R: Oh sure. Of course I can remember it.

G: Do you recall any of the details there?

R: Oh, there weren't any particular details, just a very good place to have Jack Kennedy because of that heavy Mexican population. And at that particular point Jack Kennedy was very, very popular with the Mexicans.

G: Do you think LBJ saw Kennedy at this point as a future presidential candidate?

R: I doubt it. Hard to tell. Again, on a thing like that LBJ would have kept his own counsel. He rarely engaged in that kind of speculative conversation that most men do. I myself wondered at the Chicago convention whether Kennedy, with that little taste that he had of the nomination, wasn't going to set his cap very firmly for it in 1960. But I kind of doubt whether Johnson was thinking too seriously about it at the time.

G: Let's go back to the Fort Worth convention now.

R: Yes.

G: The so-called governor's convention. Let me ask you to just go through and start at the top and tell me everything you remember about the convention.

R: That convention was held in an atmosphere of such bitter acrimony that most of it runs before me as a blur. Everybody was out with blood in their eye, and it was difficult to tell just who was going to back whom and just what were the factors at work. It was the kind of convention that developed a tremendous mythology. One was that it was held under the guns of--this was an article that appeared in the Texas Observer after it was over--how it was held under the guns of a posse. Well, what that was was a sheriff's posse from Mineral Wells, which consists of a number of middle-aged--at that time--consisted of a number of middle-aged dentists and doctors and teachers and what have you that were very fond of palomino horses. I doubt if those guns could even shoot if they'd been loaded, which they weren't. They did have quite a bit of security at the convention simply because there

had been some evidence at the earlier convention in May of ringers coming in and casting votes to which they weren't entitled. They had some sort of a card that you had to show in order to get into the place. It had to be flashed under an ultraviolet light. That was one of the myths.

Another was how Frankie Randolph, that gentle woman, had been compelled to stand in a cowbarn while the thing was going on, out of sheer animosity. Now that again was nonsense. The cowbarn was one at Fort Worth which had been converted into a very, very comfortable coffee and donut and sandwich place. And what happened, she was entitled to go into the convention as a national committeewoman, but there was a fight over the seating of the--

G: Harris County delegation.

R: --Harris County delegation. The thing was very bitterly fought because there were very peculiar circumstances under which the Harris County delegation, the conservative delegation that was being contested, had a right to vote on its own seating. This really caused some bitter animosity. To get the full of that you should talk to Vann Kennedy, because Kennedy--have you ever talked to him about that particular thing?

G: No.

R: Kennedy was the parliamentarian at the convention, and I've forgotten his rationale now. It doesn't matter too much. What it really amounted to was that the convention came down to a contest between Johnson, who had on his side the Latin delegations from South Texas

and the conservatives--he had them on his side not because he was conservative but simply because it was either Johnson or have Kathleen Voigt take over completely.

Everything that came out of that convention was bad from beginning to end. It was one of those unfortunate things; it's too bad it had to be held at all. You know, the original purpose of that thing--I've forgotten exactly where it originated, but [it was by] some governor who decided that he might not like what the Democratic Party was going to do nationally and so he wanted a convention after the national convention in order to decide how to swing the state. I think that may have been in 1928 but I'm not sure of that. But that was one of the things that was really involved here. If the conservatives had had any power, what they would have done would have been to try to take the Texas Democratic Party into the Eisenhower camp again. Of course on the other hand, the liberals wanted an all-out anti-conservative campaign against Eisenhower, and what Johnson and Rayburn wanted was something they could live with in the future.

G: Had Johnson met with the Shivers forces and reached some sort of accord?

R: No. Oh, no. He never would have done that. He couldn't have done it. At that point Shivers was still awful mad at him.

G: Really? Is it correct that none of the three factions had a numerical majority, that it was simply--?

R: Yes, that's true. You had to have combinations. Nobody had a numerical majority. I think that if there had been any way of seating that liberal delegation from Houston, then I think the liberals--I don't

know if they had a numerical majority but they would have been pretty powerful.

G: Apparently there was some question of El Paso and Harris County.

R: Yes.

G: If both were seated the liberals would have a majority.

R: I wish I could remember it now. I remember the two were tied together, but I can't tell you how at this late date. To me that convention was just a nightmare.

G: Do you recall the episode between Johnson and Woodrow Bean, where LBJ told Woodrow Bean he would seat him if the El Paso delegation would vote for the conservative Houston delegation? Evidently it got out of Woodrow Bean's control and Johnson reconvened the credentials committee.

R: I remember that well. I remember that well.

G: Can I ask you to describe that one?

R: Well, there isn't much I can describe. What you have just set forth is pretty much the facts. Woody had in effect offered a trade, that he'd take care of the El Paso delegation in return for--I forget what it was in return for. But it developed that he simply couldn't control the delegation. As far as Johnson was concerned that was a breach of good faith, and he and John Connally pulled the thing together again and called off the whole deal. The facts as you've set them forth are basically it, and really there isn't much I could add to it except color. And again, that convention was such an unholy nightmare that I've forgotten most of the color.

G: Was Johnson mad at Bean?

R: Yes. And how! He was mad at Bean because he thought Bean had gone back on his word, which is an unforgivable sin among politicians. I myself think that Woody was over-optimistic as to what he could do with that El Paso delegation.

G: Now, you had in Harris County a lot of people like Sam Low, I guess, and John Singleton, Warren Cunningham and people like that. How did these people fit in with the liberal-conservative [inaudible]?

R: You have to know something about Harris County politics in those days. Harris County politics was very peculiar. It was an ongoing battle between an extreme left and an extreme right. The extreme left would have scared the voters in Vito Marcantonio's district in New York they were so far left. And the extreme right would have scared the voters in Phoenix, Arizona they were so far right. What happened is that the control of the city shifted back and forth every two years. The liberals would win in order to save the city from the conservatives, and the conservatives would win in order to save the city from the liberals. And in between you had a form of continuity that came through a few pragmatic political figures that were really neither liberal nor conservative, but who just realized that some way or another the city and the county had to be run. There was Roy Hofheinz and there was Sam Low and there were a few others. And I'm not even sure which delegation they were on. They were probably on the conservative delegation because they were neither liberal nor conservative. I think they could live a little bit better with the conservatives

than the liberals, or maybe they weren't on either delegation, I'm not sure.

But what happened at that particular convention was not a question of negotiation. That may be the key to the whole thing. As a rule you negotiate things out. There was no way in the world you could negotiate anything out of that convention, because nobody was in a mood to trade. The Woody Bean thing was the only example I know of a genuine negotiation. Otherwise what happened is everything proceeded by brute force. You either had the votes or you didn't have them. I can recall--one thing was really funny. There was some sort of a vote going on, and I was standing alongside of one of the Kazens. I think it was Chic. And I took a look and said, "Oh my God, there's an awful lot of votes. Going to have to get twenty or twenty-five." I remember Chic saying, "Don't worry, I got them right here," tapping his hip pocket. We got to Webb County, and wham, there they were. It was that kind of a convention. There was a lot of maneuvering going on, but it was all futile maneuvering, because everybody was too set in their positions to come to any kind of accommodation. You can look upon that convention as one of the worst examples of ideological politics run wild in Texas history.

G: How did the Yarborough-Daniel race affect the different factions of the convention?

R: It didn't any more than you would expect. Now wait, I have one memory, and it's a rather vague one, a rather vague one, of Price Daniel backing down on something he'd promised to do, or at least that

was Johnson's interpretation. What in the devil was it? I remember talking to A. W. Moursund about it later, and A. W. telling me that he thought that Price Daniel was going to back out at the last minute, because he said that Price's wife wouldn't look him in the eye, and it's always a bad sign when a man's wife won't look you in the eye when you've got a deal on with him. I wish I could pin that down specifically.

G: Did that have to do with his resignation and when he would resign, do you think?

R: No, I don't think so. I'm sorry, I just can't remember it. Again, that whole thing was a nightmare.

G: Did Johnson fear that the liberals might throw out Daniel's nomination--it was so close--and certify Yarborough as the nominee?

R: I don't think so. I don't think he would have minded, frankly. I don't think it would have meant that much to him.

G: Johnson seems to have regarded Yarborough as much more of a rival at this point than Price Daniel.

R: Oh, no question about it, because Price Daniel wasn't a rival in any sense of the word. Price Daniel's ambitions were very clear. What he was ultimately shooting for was to become governor of Texas. You know, Price Daniel's term in the Senate was just because he had no place else to go. He wasn't really interested in the Senate. Texas traditionally has always had two separate types of politicians: some that are only interested in the state, and some that are only interested in the Senate. Price was really only interested in the state.

And Johnson had no ambitions for the governorship. Whereas Yarborough, on the other hand, very clearly was pointed toward the Senate.

G: Let's talk about Daniel's resignation. There was some suggestion that Shivers might name an interim appointment and appoint Coke Stevenson, who would probably vote with the Republicans.

R: I never heard that.

G: You never heard that?

R: No. I don't think even Allan would have been that vindictive. It wouldn't have made any sense.

G: Anything on the timing of Daniel's resignation?

R: I just can't remember it.

G: Now let me go back and--

R: You see, let me add one other word. My principal concern at that convention was not on the details as much as it was on the very obvious fact that this thing could develop so badly that Johnson would lose his Texas base. You know, a politician that's lost his home base is not scheduled to do great things. So consequently I cannot tell you the details as much of that convention as I could normally. It was one of those things where my own desire was to get it over with as fast as possible with the least amount of attention.

G: That seems to indicate that there was some problem with the Dallas--

R: Oh, of course there was, there were always problems in Dallas.

G: Bill Cooper was one of Johnson's--

R: That was Dallas in May. I can't shed much light on that.

G: Let me ask you about two other incidents that took place during the campaign. One was Johnson addressing his supporters at the Baker Hotel in Dallas--this was earlier--criticizing Shivers and Brownell. It was written up--I think by you--as being a very rousing speech, an effective speech. Do you remember that?

R: I remember it as being a very rousing, effective speech, yes. What he was trying to do--Eisenhower was very popular in Texas but Brownell sure wasn't. And I think what he was trying to do--you see, the whole Shivers ploy was to associate his name with Eisenhower, and Eisenhower was going to carry Texas regardless. Whereas the Johnson ploy was to try to shift the focus just enough to put him together with Brownell, who was doing an awful lot of things that Texans didn't like. Johnson could be very effective about a thing like that, he really knew how to do it.

(Interruption)

G: The other point was the welcoming crowd in Washington after the county conventions.

R: (Laughter) We set that up. I remember it, that night I called Walter [Jenkins]--rather Johnson called Walter, and I suggested, for the love of God get a crowd out there, which is very easy to do, of course, and get a band. That was one of those things which was as carefully planned as a thing could be on about twenty hours notice. It was easy to get a crowd out. After all, you had the whole Texas delegation and their office staffs. An awful lot of newspapermen came down, some out of curiosity and some to write. It was an awful big story, you know,

Johnson's defeat of Shivers. I don't know where Walter dug up the band, but it was almost like a Roman triumph. I think if Johnson had walked out dragging Shivers behind him by the heels in a chariot it would have been a specific Roman triumph, you know, Caesar back from Gaul with Vercingetorix in chains or something like that.

G: Was Johnson surprised by this?

R: No, of course he wasn't surprised, we'd set it up.

G: Paul Butler was there, too, I understand.

R: I don't remember that. I know Jim Rowe was there and Jim Rowe had a meeting. He took Johnson right off to the meeting, I remember that. I've forgotten what the meeting was, but. . . . See, it was very good for Johnson because quite often a southern politican can get an awful lot of mileage just out of northern ignorance of southern politics. I still think that Jimmy Carter got his big boost up north because he defeated George Wallace in South Carolina. Now, I could have gone down and defeated George Wallace in South Carolina at that particular point, but most northerners don't know that. They become afraid of somebody like George Wallace or Allan Shivers or something like that. Therefore when they're beaten by another southerner, all of a sudden that southerner becomes a tremendous hero in northern eyes, which is why I was perfectly willing to set up that demonstration just to drive home the fact here's the man that beat the big bad wolf, and Shivers was a big bad wolf in northern eyes then.

G: Abe Fortas came down to Texas during the campaign. Do you recall his visit?

R: Not particularly, but it's not surprising. He came down quite a bit. I don't think there was anything particular going on at the moment.

G: What was Mrs. Johnson's attitude toward the favorite son candidacy?

R: You know, I really don't know. Once a decision was made, Mrs. Johnson would throw herself into it passionately. She was money, marbles and chalk. I did not hear anything that she had to say before it arose, so I have no idea how she felt then. And certainly after it happened she was very, very loyal; she just walked in, did everything she could.

G: Some of LBJ's statements at the time seem to indicate that she was much more apprehensive about it, maybe from the health standpoint. He said, "The entire state of Texas is enthusiastic, although Lady Bird is not."

R: I don't think it was that. I think that. . . . I really don't know what he meant. I'd have to guess.

G: He had had a heart attack the year before.

R: I know, and that was probably it more than anything else. But also, you have to allow for another factor. Don't forget, Bird is a lot more conservative than Johnson. Bird basically is from East Texas, from Karnack, and there is a somewhat different attitude there than there is in the Hill Country of Texas. Even more important than that, I think that Bird had reached a point in life where she very sensibly was tired of struggling all the time. I think most people arrive at some point where they want to cash in a few chips and have a little bit of enjoyment. I think she'd reached that stage. There could have

been a combination of circumstances. You're probably right about the health being the major thing.

(Interruption)

G: 1956.

R: Right.

G: How did the presidential election in 1956 affect Lyndon Johnson?

R: In what sense do you mean?

G: Well, Stevenson's defeat.

R: I don't think it really affected him at all one way or another. He'd done everything that was feasible for Johnson in Texas. It is true that he might have been able to do more, but it would not have been feasible. He'd emerged from it I think with some dignity and with a reasonably good record. There were many people that thought he didn't do enough, but again, that's the old thing of how many hairs make a beard. Since the Eisenhower victory was inevitable that year anyway, only a blind man could have failed to see that Eisenhower was going to win that big. Almost anything that could happen had been reasonably well anticipated in advance.

G: Was Johnson's position strengthened as a result of Stevenson now having lost twice?

R: Not particularly. Stevenson is the kind of a candidate that political parties invariably select when defeat is inevitable. That is, he's one of two types they invariably select. If you look at the history of candidate selection, it invariably works out that when a party knows it's doomed it either picks some crackpot from a wing that has

been giving it a lot of trouble, like the Republicans will go way to the far right because that way they can pay off some debts to the far right, the Democrats will go to the far left. Or they look for a candidate who has a tremendous amount of dignity and can give the political followers some inspiration, and that's what Stevenson did. Stevenson fulfilled his role very admirably, that of giving the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party members some inspiration. I don't think he did it as well in 1956 as he did in 1952, because I believe in 1952 he realized that defeat was inevitable. Whereas in 1956 I think that he felt for a while that he had a chance.

G: Did Stevenson's defeat create a vacuum in the Democratic Party?

R: Oh, of course not. American political parties are not made up that way. The only kind of a defeat that creates a vacuum in an American political party is when a seated president runs and is defeated. Then a vacuum is created. But the reality of American politics is that there is no leadership of a political party except when that political party has a president in the White House. Again, this is one of those tremendous confusions that I blame on Woodrow Wilson. The effort to identify American political parties or those of England where you have clear-cut leadership, where you have yearly conventions that determine programs and policies. The American political party, whatever its origins may have been--I think at one time they were ideological. But whatever the origins may have been, the American political party is primarily a nominating mechanism which represents many conflicting

points of view and really does not have policy, in the sense that the Labour Party has a policy.

G: I'm looking for one of your memoranda. Here it is. Here is a memorandum that you--

R: Yes, I remember that.

G: --wrote on the Republican scandals. Did Johnson utilize these issues?

R: Individual conversations, yes. But what it was done mostly for--do you know what the date of this is?

G: No, I'm sorry.

R: It says the fall of 1956. The principal point of that really was to give individual Republicans some pretty strong reminders that they'd better drop the so-called mess in Washington issue. You know the mess in Washington issue was a very potent one for bringing down the Democratic administrations that had run Washington ever since 1932. And it was very peculiar, the mess in Washington. If you check it out, you'll discover there were very few big scandals. What there were were a series of small scandals. You know, you get back to the days of Harry Truman and the five percenters. One of the scandals involved a mink coat, a Polaroid Land camera, a deepfreeze as a gift for some--it was all small-time petty stuff, which I think by the way hurt the Democrats more than big scandals would have, because not only were there obvious rinky-dinks going on, but it was cheap, sort of street corner grifter stuff. And the Republicans were still trying to wrap the scandal issue around the Democrats. That memo was written

primarily for Johnson to use in individual conversations and to sort of warn the Republicans off from it.

G: Conversations with Republicans?

R: Oh, of course. Oh, of course. In the Senate you converse with everybody.

G: Do you remember his using these with [William] Knowland or anyone in particular?

R: I don't think he would have used it with Knowland, because Knowland was not much of a scandal guy. But I can well see him in a conversation with Styles Bridges saying, "Hey, Styles, look what one of my assistants has just added up for me. Now look, Styles, do you really want to talk about--"

G: Which one of these do you think was the most embarrassing for the administration?

R: For the administration? Let me look them over. Obviously [Harold] Talbott, that was the most embarrassing for the administration. Ezra Taft Benson would have been embarrassing except it was a little bit complicated, hard to explain to people. The others were just Republican scandals, which--you know, every administration has scandals like this. It's inevitable. Most of these things are fairly small really. But Talbott, that was sort of reaching up into the official family.

G: Now let me ask you about the NATO conference.

R: In Paris?

G: In November. You went along on that.

R: Oh, boy. I sure did.

G: Theodore Green, [Richard] Russell.

R: Green, Russell, [William] Fulbright, and who from the House now? There was some Republican from the House who was very much on his high horse, very antagonistic to Johnson. I wish I could remember who that was. And there were one or two others. But the important thing about that conference is the context. That was shortly after the Suez crisis, I've forgotten which one, and it had cut off most fuel deliveries to Paris. This was in--what was the month?

G: November.

R: November, and boy it was cold. There was no heat in those Paris hotels at all, and you could only get what they called hot water for about two hours every morning, and hot water meant that the ice wouldn't clink as it came out of the faucet. I'll never forget. We were in the Intercontinental, and you know those big French beds that have four posters and all kinds of drapes you can pull. I just took the drapes down and used them as extra blankets. Jesus, it was cold! And the American Embassy had all kinds of arrangements, I suspect most of which were illegal, to be sure that its cars were getting enough gasoline. There were lines around every gasoline station that were about ten blocks long.

But the major issue that was going to come before that conference--well, there were two issues, both of which were considerably important, and one of which was rather embarrassing to the United States. One issue was obviously the fuel issue, what should be done about it. And the other issue was the Russian occupation of Hungary. The first one

was disposed of rather easily by a display of virtuosity on the part of Richard Brevard Russell such as I have never seen before or since. I'll never forget it. The State Department had a resolution they wanted the American delegation to introduce, and boy, the thing just bristled with left-wing socialist phrases condemning the Soviet Union. They had the State Department type who read the resolution to us, and Russell looked at him and said, "It's a very fine resolution, young man, a very fine resolution. But do you think the American delegation should introduce it?" Now, the State Department type thought that he was up against some tobacco-chewing southerner who was objecting to all the socialist things. He said, "Why not, Senator?" And Russell said, "Well, young man, don't you think that resolution would have a lot more impact if it came from a labor or a socialist government?"

I can just see the State Department type's mouth drop open. And Russell leaned back in his chair and said, "Let me see," he was just thinking out loud. He gave one of the most brilliant discussions of the internal politics of Europe I have ever heard. Nobody knew that Russell knew things like that. I did, but most people didn't know it. Harvard would have had its chest stuck out ten feet if they could have had anybody deliver that lecture. And he finally said, "Young man, take that resolution over to Paul-Henri Spaak and tell him that his good friend Russell, Richard B. Russell, wants his opinion on it. Don't tell him I want him to introduce it. He'll resent that. Just tell him I want his opinion on it. He'll know what to do." And so the next day the Soviet Union was condemned by a resolution introduced

by the socialist government of Belgium, which just went through automatically. That's one thing I remember.

Now, the more difficult problem was that of fuel, and it was a difficult problem, because what these European countries did not understand is that the federal government in the United States had no control over fuel. What they wanted was some form of a resolution that in effect said that we were all going to get together and do something about fuel supplies. Well, that just wouldn't do. In the first place it would have put Johnson in one hell of a spot politically, but even without that consideration it still would have been embarrassing to the United States because in a showdown it would have turned out that the United States was helpless to do anything about its domestic producers. There was a long wrangle around the table in which Johnson was making speeches that were totally incomprehensible to the European delegates. I remember he kept talking about the allowable, and what in the hell did somebody from Germany or Paris know about the allowable. What he meant, of course, was the monthly allowable put out by the Texas Railroad Commission. Well, I had a thought, and I wrote out a line in which I put the phrase that the oil situation in Europe should be a matter of common concern for all of the NATO countries, and I showed it to Bill Fulbright. Fulbright took one look and said, "George, that's it. Hand it to Johnson." And Johnson introduced it and it was passed. It pulled some really bad chestnuts out of the fire.

Aside from that almost everything that happened at that conference was just sheer fun and games. I'll never forget that hideous French toilet paper. I think it was waxed, if you can imagine toilet paper that's waxed and using it in the morning, that's what we had. I wondered why as we walked to our hotel suite the Foreign Relations Committee staff director, [Carl] Marcy was passing out rolls of toilet paper. That struck me as odd until I got into the bathroom.

Also that's the first time where I located my favorite Parisian bar, which is Calvatos [?]. I had a marvelous meal at Bergetuite [?]. They had a few days, and Johnson and most of the staff went on down to Nice, which is the last thing in the world I wanted to do. I wanted to roam around Paris. I had a marvelous time. I wandered over to the Louvre. Because I had never been in France--never been in Europe before. I ran into some old friends. Webb Miller's son was then working in Paris for the Wall Street Journal and I ran into him by accident and so he took me to Chez Annam [?], a marvelous little delicatessen where chickens and dogs roamed around the place. I'll never forget lifting a piece of rabbit, sevet a lapin [?], to my mouth and suddenly realized something was looking at me and turning my head like this and there was this big French poodle watching that piece of rabbit.

That's all there was to it. But those were the two substantive things that happened. And really, Johnson emerged from it with considerable credit.

G: Did he get along well with the delegates from other countries?

R: No, but he didn't get along badly with them either. Most of them--Johnson and the European intellectuals were not precisely compatible. He got along reasonably well with Harold Wilson at a later date. He got along reasonably well with Charles deGaulle because he knew how to upstage deGaulle as well as deGaulle knew how to upstage him. But at something like the NATO Parliamentary Conference what you really get is an assemblage of intellectuals, and Johnson was always uncomfortable around professional intellectuals. That's a much more common thing in Europe than it is in the United States. He didn't have too much contact with them in reality.

G: Yes. Here is a memo that you did that seems to put Johnson in a much better light than you've just described.

R: Well, he was in a very good light really. Yes, that's it. This is exactly what I've been telling you about except that it's a little more precise. What the resolution that the European delegates wanted said was that the question of supplying oil to Europe should be a matter of common policy and mutual aid. Well, that was just impossible. That was awful. The State Department type had been on the commission that drafted the resolution and he had no concept whatsoever of the technical problems involved in the production of oil in the United States. You know, the state control over the production of oil is a constitutional question, it's not just a matter of leaving it to the states.

G: But this one I think seems to make Johnson's speech sound more effective.

R: It was very effective after I gave him the compromise. The compromise came from me. There's no doubt about that. I mean, this idea of being a matter of common concern. What I did in effect was substitute concern for policy. I think once Johnson realized that--Johnson could not speak effectively if he could not see a way out. Well, he didn't see the way out until I handed him this common concern.

G: Why was he chosen to go on that?

R: I think he wanted to.

G: Was this something that he more or less appointed himself to do or was it the administration?

R: Oh, no, the administration had nothing to do with it. This is the Parliamentary Conference.

G: I see.

R: Oh, you can never trace a thing like that. If the Senate Democratic Leader wants to go on something like that, there's no--

G: He didn't take many foreign trips, did he?

R: No, but he got to liking it there. He was always a little bit afraid to do so, that he might be accused of taking junkets at taxpayers' expense.

This is a very good account of what's happened. Of course, I was arranging the facts in their most favorable manner, but nevertheless these are the facts, including the burst of applause.

G: Is this something that Johnson, or you and LBJ used with the press later?

R: Yes, pretty much. I think it was primarily written for Drew Pearson or somebody like that. But it is an accurate rendition of the facts. The British caught it immediately, and the other delegates realized that this was the best they could get. But Johnson's speech was good once he saw a goal.

G: Okay. Now let me go back and pick up some of the legislative issues that we did not discuss.

R: Sure.

G: These fall earlier in the year, of course. You did talk about Senator [Francis] Case and the natural gas act. But let me ask you about the [Thomas] Hennings resolution. Evidently there was, in addition to the [Walter] George Committee, Senator Hennings introduced a resolution.

R: You're talking about the Bricker Amendment.

G: No, this was about the natural gas act, the investigations--

R: Oh, yes. Sorry.

G: Hennings, after his initial proposal, seemed to favor a much broader investigation of lobbying activities and this was not supported by LBJ.

R: I can't help you on that one. I've just plain forgotten. I remember at that particular point I had been so convinced that that bill should be pulled off the floor, that no good could come out of it, that after that my role was somewhat peripheral.

G: There was also a question of who should chair the select committee. Evidently there was some--Senator Gore wanted to chair it, and [John]

McClellan ended up being the chairman of it. Do you have any insights on that?

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R: Not particularly, but I think it's rather easy to figure out. That investigation was bound to be bad for Texas any way you look at it, because it was going to make some oil company somewhere--they had tried to slip a bribe to Senator Case, that's all there was to it. And any time oil looked bad, Texas looked bad. Here Johnson was the leader of the Senate, and that could get some nasty questions back home. It would help if a man was a known conservative, like McClellan, who also had a deserved reputation for probity, which McClellan had and deserved. It would help a lot if somebody like that were in charge.

G: Anthony Eden came over and spoke in the Senate chamber and spent some time in Washington.

R: Yes.

G: Any significance in that visit?

R: No. None. That is as far as Johnson's concerned. Plenty of significance of course in terms of foreign policy. That was courtesy stuff as far as the United States Senate was involved.

G: Okay. You met with Wayne Morse early in the year about his re-election needs. He had at least two: one was the Hells Canyon; the other one was appropriations for some of the Oregon power projects.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that? Can you give me some background of that?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Let's see now, is this 1956?

G: Yes. Well, Hells Canyon did not pass that year; it came up again in the following year.

R: Because the origin of the whole thing was in 1955 when--I've got to be a little bit long range in this. You can't answer this shortly. There were two major projects, water projects--they weren't power projects, but water projects--before the Senate. One was the Upper Colorado River Basin, which was very important to the Republicans, especially to Gene Millikin of Colorado. The other was the Kicking Horse Canyon Dam, which was a power project which was vital to Democrats in the Northwest and the West. What was really happening is each was hostage for the other. There was some very complex maneuvering, which went on for years, and you could not bring either one out without strong guarantees the other would come out, too. One of the difficulties with it was that the projects were not really comparable. Kicking Horse Canyon Dam was a power project; the Upper Colorado River Basin was a reclamation project. If they had been comparable, if they had both been power projects or if they had both been reclamation projects it would have been a lot simpler.

But nevertheless, there had been, as I said, some very complex maneuvering, and Wayne Morse had staked everything on Kicking Horse Canyon Dam. He had to at least get a vote on it. I've forgotten about the other projects, but the other projects were not too terribly difficult. There's an old gag--not a gag, but there's a method of handling those things which has served for years. It's one thing to

get an authorization for a project, it's another thing to get some money for it. And if worse comes to worse, you can get an authorization for anything. You can come up with a project to divide Lake Michigan into two parts and to build a five hundred foot wall clear across the middle of the lake so you have an upper and a lower Lake Michigan. You can get it authorized, but wait until you try and get some money for it. I have a feeling that most of the Wayne Morse projects were solved by authorizations.

But the Kicking Horse Canyon Dam already had an authorization. What it needed was money. Now, Johnson really was very anxious to do something for Wayne Morse. In the first place, as I've already said, he had sort of a sneaking, grudging admiration for Wayne. They were constantly kicking each other in the teeth, but they sort of liked each other. But in the second place, Johnson wanted to get a really big legislative triumph to offset the Eisenhower victory in the presidency. And everything counted. We made a rather careful survey in the Senate to see what every Democrat needed--really needed, not said he needed, but really needed. And I don't know what to say about it; Wayne Morse and I had a very good conversation. We always got along well. That was it.

G: Did Johnson help Morse pretty effectively?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. We got the bill out on the floor. I've forgotten what happened to it now, but we got it out on the floor. I was never too sure in my own mind that it was a meritorious project, but it sure was meritorious politically.

G: Now, how about the Arkansas-Fryingpan water diversion project?

R: I don't really remember that one. I remember the name, and that's about all. Who was up for election that year? I don't think that was Fulbright. In fact, I'm not sure that the Arkansas-Fryingpan project was really in Arkansas. I think it was in Missouri or something like that. I'm just not sure. I have a dim memory of it, but it's too dim to say anything.

G: LBJ sponsored an elections bill.

R: Oh, Christ, yes!

G: That's where he got all the sponsors and then--

R: I can tell you that inch by inch. In fact, eighth of an inch by eighth of an inch.

G: Go ahead.

R: What a debacle that was! What it really amounted to, that was an aftermath of the natural gas act, because it had spattered mud over everybody from Texas. And of course to a certain extent it had really cast a cloud over everybody, because it dramatized this business of money buying elections. Now, one of the things that Johnson wanted to do, wanted very badly to do, was to get some support in Washington, some newspaper support for himself, or at least something that would take the heat off. And there was a rather complete conference out at Johnson's house involving Johnson, me, Jim Rowe, and Phil Graham of the Washington Post. Graham was very much of a reformer, very much of an idealist. What it really came down to was that if Johnson would

put in some really effective legislation to control campaign spending, that the Post would treat him in a much kindlier fashion.

I've forgotten now who drew up the bill. It was one of those things where--it really was a rather good bill, I think, from a technical standpoint, and Johnson really overreached himself. He decided to make this thing really big and he started to pick up sponsors. He got so damn many sponsors, I don't know who didn't sponsor it. He had much more than a majority of the Senate on it. Even Joe McCarthy signed it. Now of course when you really get down to the lick log, nobody in the Senate wanted to pass a campaign control bill. And again, that's something that people do not understand. It's not because every senator is a crook and wants leeway for his crookedness. It's just that every time you pass one of those damn things you invariably create more troubles than you solve. I myself came to the conclusion a long time ago that these campaign reform laws are an absolute hoax. Any law you pass, somebody is going to figure a way of getting around it, for one thing. But number two, what you're really doing is shifting the various power vectors in the United States. Every reform that I have ever seen is a reform that's intended to correct the evils of the previous reform. You pass a reform, then thirty years later you have to pass a reform to get yourself out of the mess that you got into with your first one. It goes on and on that way. Nobody wants to play games with it if they possibly can. You have to have something much more overwhelming than that so-called bribery case.

Of course to a certain extent, the mere multiple sponsorship of the bill helped to kill it, because when people actually started to talk about it, then the sponsors started to drop off like flies. You know, one here, one there. It just looked like a complete rout. But overall, I think that Johnson's major purpose was accomplished. It did give him a forum, a line of communication, to Phil Graham, which he badly needed.

G: The UAW attacked the measure, arguing that it really stymied labor's participation in politics.

R: I think it would have created some problems for the--what do they call that--the PACs in those days. No, they had another name for it. It didn't matter. You know, labor is forbidden in the Taft-Hartley Act and also in the Hatch Act from taking an active role in politics. So what has happened is--oh, COPE, that was it. So labor set up an organization known as COPE, which put the arm in every union for political contributions. What they did, they took them out of individual membership dues. It's one of those elaborate things that we get into in the United States where we always insist on making everything hard to do but never really prevent it from being done. I think this probably was true that--I've forgotten the details now, but it's probably true it would have caused a lot of difficulty with COPE.

G: Another criticism of the legislation was that it really didn't cover primary elections.

R: No, of course it didn't.

G: Which was, particularly in Texas, where the battles were fought.

R: Well, that's true all through the South. And true in many big cities in the North, too.

G: Why didn't it cover primaries?

R: In the first place, you raise some extraordinary legal problems. You wouldn't have those problems now, but you did have them then. The Supreme Court has since then rendered some decisions, in which what they've said in effect is that the primary is just a step toward the election, and therefore the primary comes under federal jurisdiction just as well as does an election. But in those days it was rather clear from court decisions, or at least it was indicated by the court decisions, that the federal government did not have jurisdiction over the primary. The whole basis of the southern segregation effort after the Civil War was to turn the real election into the primary on the grounds that under the Constitution the federal government could not control the primary. That a political party was a private club, and that a political party could exclude anybody that it really wanted. Well, of course, what they were doing was seeing to it that the differences between various white factions would be argued out in a forum from which blacks were excluded. And once the whites had settled their differences, then they would have no trouble in the general election that fall taking care of the blacks.

But legally at that particular time it was a very dubious proposition, that the federal government had any authority over the primaries. And I myself have a feeling that if the issue had gone before the courts, the courts would have held that anything like that was

unconstitutional. You see, what made it constitutional--I don't believe most modern observers realize just how much of a difference the whole civil rights movement made in judicial interpretation. So many things suddenly became constitutional, because they were civil rights questions, that were not constitutional before. And I suspect that this is what has happened to the primary, that the courts under the aegis of civil rights doctrines, have decided that primaries after all are subject to federal control. But any lawyer at the time would have made to you a very respectable argument that these things were not subject.

G: Let me ask you about the farm bill.

R: Yes. Which one?

G: Well, this was an annual question I guess of the Democrats favoring high price supports as opposed to the administration's flexible supports. LBJ apparently in 1956 was successful in substituting the Democratic version and then charged that the administration was trying to intimidate the senators by threatening to veto the bill if it were passed. It was passed and Eisenhower did veto it.

R: Oh, Lord, I almost hate to get in this because I practically have to give you a six months lecture on farm legislation. It's tricky.

G: You've talked about the background before in the previous years.

R: I know. But you see, fundamentally this arises out of different attitudes within the farm bloc. Now, actually Johnson was in a very difficult position on this matter, because he had enough different types of farm constituencies that any stand he took was going to hurt

him with somebody. Most of the cattlemen wanted the flexible price supports simply because they thought it would hold down the price of feed grains. On the other hand, the cotton growers and the wheat farmers, they wanted the fixed price supports. So in a way, since Johnson was damned if he did and damned if he didn't, he had a hell of a lot of flexibility. I think what he was doing generally was going along primarily with the fixed price supports simply because it was a traditional Democratic tradition. This had been put in under Roosevelt and the New Deal, and therefore he was just going to stick with it rather than go with the flexible price support, which was a drive that had originated with Ezra Taft Benson and consequently was a Republican deal. I think the only significance to the thing is it was just another example of his building himself up in a very strong position in the leadership of the Democratic Party. He rather liked Clair Engle though, by the way; Engle was one of his friends.

G: Here was a situation where he evidently was able to put together a majority where he had not been able to do so the previous years--

R: Oh, yes.

G: --including getting some of the Democrats who had voted--[inaudible].

R: Closer to election, Mike, closer to election.

G: Do you recall his tactics?

R: No, because the tactics would have been standard tactics anyway. There was nothing unusual; it was just you were closer to an election. The only time I ever recall tactics at this late date is when there

was something unusual about them. There wasn't anything unusual about that.

G: Okay. There was also a move to drop the increase in the Mexican sugar quota. Texans were evidently in favor of increasing the Texas sugar quota, maybe because of--

R: Hopefulness. That's one of those damn fool things. Texas as a state really has very little interest in the sugar quotas. The states in the United States that do have interest are Louisiana, Wyoming, Colorado, possibly Utah, I'm not sure, mostly the Rocky Mountain states, and maybe Mississippi. Louisiana is almost all sugar cane, the others are sugar beets. And of course what has happened is that that sugar legislation has become one of the damnedest political footballs in Washington. It's very complex. It attracts lobbyists like honey attracts flies. I think some day somebody is going to do a rather major study of it which really gets kind of seamy and kind of smelly. It's been a mainstay for a number of law firms and lobbyists in Washington. You'll find Clark Clifford has been involved, his law firm anyway, in representing a number of nations. When Harold Cooley finally retired from Congress--he'd been chairman of the House Agriculture Committee that handled sugar quotas.

What it really amounted to is that, you see, when Castro took over Cuba, what that meant was that there was that great big Cuban sugar quota, which was an enormous one. The State Department wanted to use it as an instrument of foreign policy, which made some sense. But on the other hand what happened is that the American producers

wanted to use it as a means of increasing their own production. You know how the Sugar Act works?

G: No.

R: The price is pegged. The United States guarantees a set price for sugar in the American market. But on the other hand, the producing nations have to guarantee that they will only send a certain amount of sugar into the United States. Therefore here was this great big fat Cuban sugar quota--I think it was even larger than the United States quota--and that gave a lot of boodle to pass out to various people. Well, naturally the State Department's ideas were not going to prevail very much, because every lobbyist in Washington jumped aboard and they were either hired by Nicaragua or by Ecuador, by Guatemala or something like that. What happened there I think is that there were some Texans who thought that they could get into the sugar business, which they couldn't get into unless something was done about the quota. I think that's all there was to it.

G: Well, the Texans seemed to have been more in favor of increasing the quota.

R: Mexican quota, yes. I think that was because they had holdings in Mexico, is my guess.

G: I thought perhaps it was for trade purposes.

R: No. That's one of those seamy little things, I wouldn't waste much time on it. It's Washington tricky-track.

G: Another hot issue that year was the increase of old age security

payments under the Social Security Act, lowering the age, the disability age.

R: Yes. That was a very, very major bill that year, very major bill. I think it had a lot to do with the huge Democratic majorities that were built up in the 1956 election.

G: Let me ask you to describe the legislative battle there and how the Democrats were able to pull that one off.

R: Oh, it wasn't hard to pull that one off at all.

G: It was a very close vote, as I recall.

R: Of course it was a close vote, because Eisenhower was agin' it. When I say he was agin' it, not money, marbles and chalk, but it was still the sort of thing that the administration was very dubious about. But it's not hard to pull off one like that in an election year. Oh brother, it would have been a miracle if it had been defeated. The fact that the vote was as close as it was indicates the dubiety with which Congress approached that. The year before it would have been defeated, because they didn't feel the hot breath of the electorate down their necks.

One of the things that's happened in American politics is that there has been a steady diminution of reliable constituencies over the last fifty or sixty years. You can no longer rely upon ethnic votes. You can no longer rely upon a solid labor vote. You can no longer rely upon a solid farmer vote. Therefore any reliable constituencies that you can find are cherished as pearls beyond price. And one of them is the old folks vote, which is a relatively new thing. It

arises out of all the economic trends that have sent old folks from the homes where they lived all their lives and sent them to Florida or to California or something like that where they all live together and where consequently they can be rather easily organized and where they can be voted almost as a bloc. I do not think that you could defeat anything for the senior citizens in the modern world in an election year unless it were really outrageous. I think that it might reach a point where you're going to get a close vote or something like that.

G: Well, in this case evidently Johnson needed one vote and Earle Clements, who was under a lot of heat, was up for re-election, and the AMA I guess was lobbying hard against it. Clements voted for it. This presumably had some effect on his election.

R: I doubt it. I think the AMA had become a totally impotent lobby at that point even in Kentucky. I think the thing that defeated Clements, he was chairman of the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee that year, and I think he spent too much time being chairman of that committee and not enough time running for re-election in Kentucky. As a rule, there's a long-established custom that the chairmanship of that committee go to somebody who is not up for re-election that year. But Clements had been so good at it--and he really was good--that he was persuaded to continue the chairmanship. He just didn't spend enough time in Kentucky, that was all.

G: Do you recall his voting for the old age--?

R: No, I don't, because I can't imagine his voting against it, AMA or no AMA. I just don't believe you could vote against that in Kentucky.

G: The depressed areas bill was another brought up that year.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that?

R: Sort of. It was a dubious proposition politically. That's the kind of thing that has enormous popularity in the areas that are depressed, but only in the areas that are depressed as areas. The rest of the country generally looks upon it as gravy or pork or whatever pejorative phrase you wish to use. Overall I think--Johnson's heart would really be in that kind of legislation, by the way. That's in the area where he really was a very convinced and devout true believer. Coincidentally it also happened to be a fairly good one to put through in an election year. But there were offsets to it. Most of the depressed areas tend to be Democratic, but at the same time you have to worry about the impact on other areas, too. Of course, you can offset that with other kinds of legislation. That's about all I've got to say, that I can think about.

G: There's one aspect of the civil rights bill which was introduced in 1956 that I want to ask you to talk about as something reflected in the memorandum, that the liberals were very inept in handling the measure that year.

R: They were.

G: Humphrey was evidently not really a part of it. The ones who were in charge simply didn't know the parliamentary procedures well enough.

R: Right.

G: Let me ask you to just elaborate on that.

R: Do you have some documentation there that would refresh my recollection? This has always been a liberal problem, by the way. They've refused to really study and absorb the mechanics of the Senate. Do you know about when the memorandum was written? It may be in this stack. This is 1957.

G: No.

(Interruption)

R: My memory is very vague here on what precipitated this. My memory is very clear on these points. I believe that the administration had sent up some kind of a proposal on civil rights. What it was I do not know, but you can check the record for that. I think what the issue amounted to was an effort on the part of some of the liberals to bring it immediately to the floor, by-passing regular procedure. They were by-passing something, I remember that. Now of course if they had done that, all that would have happened would have been a very protracted and very long session which would have not only resulted in the passage of no civil rights bill, but would have also killed a lot of other very important legislation, too. It was one of those things that nobody with a real understanding of the legislative process and with a real respect for it could possibly countenance. There was very little doubt in my mind that the administration sent it up just as an election year gimmick. I think that what happened is that some of these senators went in and figured, well, let's have a do or die effort. I don't think they were being dishonest about it, I just don't think they understood legislative procedure. And I think that

what they were saying is "Well, let's do or die. This is so important this is the overriding issue," which it was for some of them. But what you'll notice from my memorandum, Hubert Humphrey wasn't in on it. Wayne Morse wasn't in on it. And you know, I have a feeling that Everett Dirksen--I think Everett Dirksen blocked the whole thing by an objection. It had to be done by unanimous consent. That was absolutely perfect.

This is a very minor flap really, but what this is, I was trying my best to really get this in perspective for the press so there would not be a lot of nonsense about how Lyndon Johnson had blocked civil rights legislation, which he hadn't. In this particular instance, this was a totally irresponsible move that was handled by some people that didn't know what they were doing. Paul Douglas was very notorious for this. I don't think Douglas ever in his life opened the book of rules and even studied it. He was too brilliant a man not to understand them. I have a hunch he was the one that didn't know you could discharge in the morning hour. You know, I had quite a different perspective of Paul Douglas when I was working in the United States Senate than I did when I was a sophomore at the University of Chicago studying economics. But it's froth, it's not. . . .

G: Paul Butler made an effort to form the Democratic Advisory Committee--

R: Yes.

G: --and in a sense broaden the policy-making role of the Democratic Party. Johnson and Rayburn ignored it.

R: Oh, of course they ignored it.

G: Would you go into this?

R: Yes. This was one of the--you see, when you use the word "broaden the policy-making role," there wasn't any policy-making role. The Democratic Party was solely and simply an election organization, fund-raising, set up the conventions and that was it. There is no such thing as a policy-making role when a party does not control the White House. And there can't very well be, not unless you make such fundamental changes in the whole form of American government. If you want to abolish the federal system, if you want to go to a parliamentary form of government, if you want to abolish congressional districts and that sort of thing, yes, then you might be able to get political parties that have a policy-making role.

But this was a real project of Paul Butler's. Butler, for some reason, had his eyes fixed on the British parliamentary system, and obviously Rayburn and Johnson weren't going to get in anything like that. Think of the position the leadership would be in. Suppose that either Johnson or Rayburn joined such an advisory group, and that advisory committee votes, oh, 48 to 12, or 50 to 2 or something like that to repeal percentage depletion on oil, which that kind of a committee is quite likely to do. Do you think that Johnson and Rayburn can go on back to the Hill under those circumstances and live with an oil depletion bill? Suppose, for instance, that such a group votes to legalize homosexuality, which is something that a group like that might do. Can you imagine the leadership of the House and the Senate having that kind of a moral commitment laid upon their shoulders?

The thing is, again, they keep thinking of Congress as a parliament, and it's not. Our Congress is a body set up to reconcile differences, and the closest it comes to policy is not really policy at all. What it is is a reconciliation of the various differences and the various barriers that prevent the president from making policy. Policy in the United States is made by the president. But what he has to have, he has to have a firm political base upon which to make it. There's only one body in the United States that can supply that political base, that is the Congress of the United States. That's what it's there for. You always have the problem of what are a people really willing to stand for, and you can't determine that just by taking a vote, because the issues are changing so rapidly. Also it's so terribly difficult to get out and explain an issue to, let's say, eighty or ninety million people, which is about the size of the electorate. So therefore you have to have some kind of a representative body which is capable of arguing out issues, not just to vote yes or no, that's the trouble with a plebescite, but to say, well, if you can't take this, can you take that. If you can't take that, can you take this? Until you come to some form of reconciliation, it really doesn't matter what a president does.

Now, the idea that you can have a policy--you know, when you have a policy you've got to follow it. Well, they can't follow a policy in the Congress. Suppose that you get this Democratic Advisory Committee to vote to repeal the Sugar Act. What in the hell is going to happen to the senators, if they're Democratic, from Wyoming, from Colorado,

from Montana, from Louisiana? See, it can't be done. Congress is a body in which every member is representing a specific constituent interest. That's what he's there for, or she's there for. And if they don't do it, they really are not discharging their obligation. Because if they don't do it, that means one of the factors in the equation that does lead to ground upon which people can stand is missing.

I've always been appalled by this complete, absolute misunderstanding of the way the American government works. It does not work that way, and it's stupid to make it try to work that way. What Butler was trying to do would require--it could be done, if you were completely willing to scrap the Constitution from top to bottom, construct a completely different Constitution, which would be a very, very rough thing to do this late in the game. You know, back in 1789 when we were a simple nation, we could have come up with almost any constitution. At that point we could have come up with a parliamentary government; it would have worked, because life was so simple then that you couldn't do very many things that were wrong. You couldn't do anything that was disastrous. That meant that we had a hundred years or so to learn how to live with this thing.

You know, the British system, it works pretty damn well. But it started in the thirteenth century! You had a king that wanted to declare war against Holland and he didn't have enough money, so he called in the knights and the clergy, he said, "Give me the dough," and they said, "We don't have it, you have to call in the burgesses."

That's where the whole thing got started. The burgesses said, "Okay, we'll give you the dough if you promise to call us back every year." That's the way it began, in the thirteenth century! And here's Butler trying to reverse two hundred years of history and getting away with it simply because of the very large scale misunderstanding of the way our government works. Yes, a thing like that will work if you start with it at a simple time and learn how to live with it.

G: What was Kennedy's position on this?

R: Oh, I don't think he had one. Kennedy was very adept at avoiding issues.

G: But do you think this may have been in part a move to showcase Kennedy?

R: I think that may have been in Butler's mind, and it's quite possible. This is the sort of thing Bobby might come up with. Paul Butler sure was a Kennedy [supporter], money, marbles and chalk. I can see something like that. That way you'd get a number of resolutions favoring Kennedy. I can't imagine Jack Kennedy, though, going in for something like this.

G: Let me ask you, now why did Jim Rowe join the Policy Committee as the counsel, main counsel?

R: I think that Johnson just talked him into it. Rowe had been feeding Johnson a string of memoranda, most of which were rather impractical, which may sound rather strange because Jim Rowe is a very practical man. But the one thing that Jim was totally and completely lacking in was legislative experience. And he needed some. I'm never quite

sure--Johnson just told me Rowe was climbing aboard, which was okay with me because we were very good friends. I never had any problems with Jim Rowe. But Jim Rowe came aboard, and I think it was good for him. I think that he learned an awful lot out of it. I think he finally came to the realization of just what it meant to deal with a hundred prima donnas, any single one of whom could raise more unholy hell than Adolf Hitler could.

G: Do you think that Johnson brought him on as a matter of education?

R: No, I don't think so. I think Johnson probably brought him on for some rather primitive reasons. Johnson was always looking for the guru, for the prophet that could take him out of the wilderness. And Jim was one of the smartest and ablest men that he knew. I think he thought if he could get Jim to working for him that Jim might make him pope or God knows what. I think it was just that simple. You know, one of the troubles whenever you're assessing Johnson, he could be so terribly subtle in action and so extraordinarily complex in designing a move, a tactical move, that there is a tendency to look for subtleties and for complexities in his motivations, which often were extraordinarily simple. I believe this is one of those extraordinarily simple things. I'm glad he did it, because for one thing, when I talked to Jim Rowe afterward and would say to him, "Look, Jim, this memo of yours, forget it. It can't be done," he'd know what I was talking about. He hadn't known what I was talking about before that. But Jim's very smart. Boy, he's got brains, real brains.

G: Okay. There was also a move to have Robert Hill appointed as assistant secretary of state in charge of Latin American affairs.

R: Yes.

G: The Republicans were evidently attempting to get Henry Holland in and keep Hill from getting that position.

R: You've got a real complication there.

G: Tommy Corcoran was behind Hill evidently.

R: Oh, sure. Hill was a very, very conservative Republican out of the Styles Bridges camp who had an extraordinary number of friends, including me, in the Democratic camp. I like Bob. I didn't like his politics. I thought his politics were terrible. But I liked him as a person. You could always talk to him. You know, one of the problems in politics is when you talk to somebody you always have in the back of your mind, now, is this person going to take what I am saying and turn it around, turn it inside out and throw it into my face tomorrow morning under circumstances that are going to be very embarrassing? You knew Bob wouldn't do that.

Now, of course, for Lyndon Johnson or any Democrat to get into a Republican appointment of that nature would have been physically impossible. On the other hand, I would think that the administration would have a lot of problems with it, too. I suspect that this was an administration move rather than a Republican move, because Bob was pretty popular up on the Hill. I saw him twice as an ambassador, once in Mexico and once in Argentina. I don't know how good an ambassador he was, but I would think Johnson would keep hands off of that strictly.

Tommy Corcoran wouldn't; Tommy would get in anything. Tommy was outrageous.

I'll never forget when some congressional committee got into an inquiry at which they called Tommy Corcoran before them to put him on the grill. Of course, Tommy began to bat them right and left. There was nobody in the world like Tommy that could dodge questions and yet leave the feeling that he was answering fully and frankly. And Mary McGrory, writing a story about it, said the committee became more and more flabbergasted, and it became obvious that one could detect among the committee members a note of sympathy for the British who had tried to put down Mr. Corcoran's ancestors. (Laughter) Tommy had learned--you know, we Irish really did learn how to survive under very difficult circumstances, and Tommy was a master of the art.

(Interruption)

You see, all that happened there, at the beginning of the session, [Frank] Lausche had started putting out hints that he might vote this way or might vote that way. What he was obviously looking for was some kind of a bid from Lyndon Johnson. Something, anything, it didn't matter what. And it [was] handled very simply, Johnson just didn't pay any attention to him. Even Lausche realized somewhere along the line that you could not do a thing like that, that it would make him unpopular on both sides of the aisle.

[Strom] Thurmond I do not remember. Thurmond was quite a different man than Lausche. You know, Lausche specialized in being nonpartisan and nonparty. Boy, did he specialize in it. I think that if

Johnson had gone to him with any kind of an appeal whatsoever that it would have kicked back badly. But Johnson just ignored him.

G: He did vote with the Democrats, though, didn't he?

R: Yes, he did. He did because when he started to think the thing over I think he realized that if he didn't vote with the Democrats he might just as well go on back home, because he wasn't going to be anything in the Senate after that. You can not get anything done in the United States Senate if you are a complete and absolute maverick. Even Wayne Morse was not a complete and absolute maverick. He talked that way, but Wayne Morse could make a deal just as easily as Dick Russell, or as Kenneth McKellar or any of the rest of them. You get some senators who never do make a deal. They are people that make their political living out of making speeches that their constituents like. But what you're going to discover is that those senators are usually from states that really do not have very many problems where there are observable things that the Senate can do about it. You know, in a state like New York, for example, the average New Yorker from New York City or even Buffalo really pays very little attention to what his congressman is doing or whether--they don't have any dams that they're interested in, they don't have any hospitals they particularly want built, they don't have any of the normal kind of things by which politicians have to stay in power. You can stay in office forever from New York without ever doing a damn thing for your district, as long as you make the right speeches and as long as you set up the

right kind of channels so that your constituents will know you're saying the things they want to hear.

Now, Thurmond I don't really remember, but Strom was a different kettle of fish. Strom Thurmond was a very, very unusual man, rigid, fanatical, extraordinarily masculine, shall we say, full of energy. I think the guy did fifty push-ups or something like that every morning. When Thurmond went off on a principle, he really was going off on a principle. He wasn't a faker, wasn't a faker. He really believed in states' rights, by the way; that wasn't a pose. So many people think that the southern attitude on states' rights was just a pose. Well, it was a convenient attitude, and I have no doubt that for some of them it was a pose, but not for all of them.

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview IX]