

**George Weaver Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 8/20/1964**  
Administrative Information

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Weaver, George; Special Assistant to the Secretary of labor (1961); Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Director, Bureau of International Labor Affairs Department of Labor (1961-69). Weaver discusses his meetings with John F. Kennedy [JFK] as a senator and president, his impressions of JFK throughout their relationship, and JFK's interactions with foreign representatives, among other issues.

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## George Weaver

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INTERVIEW

AUGUST 20, 1964

2:30 P.M.

ROOM 3104 MAIN LABOR BUILDING

This is an interview with George Leon-Paul Weaver, Assistant Secretary of Labor, conducted by Professor Richard A. Lester, Princeton University, in Mr. Weaver's Office, Department of Labor Building, on August 20, 1964.

(Present also: Mr. Richard Conn, Director--Office of Information of the Bureau of International Labor Affairs)

LESTER: George, can you tell us something about your first meeting with, was it Senator Kennedy then, or did you know him as a Senator?

WEAVER: I knew him as a Senator, I was in and out of his office, not too frequently but quite often. In those days I was the Assistant to the President of the IUE and Director of the Political Action Program as well as the International Affairs Department of the union. I had many occasions to see Senator Kennedy on legislative matters and the visits as a rule were short and to the point of the matters that we had to discuss with him.

LESTER: Could you be more specific? Could you tell us of any particular pieces of legislation or any particular events?

WEAVER: Yes, in 1958 in one of my first meetings with him that left a lasting impression on me of the quickness of his mind, we were preparing for the congressional elections and we had what we

*Richard A. Lester*  
*George L. P. Weaver*

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thought at that time was a considerable registration drive and effort under way which was being directed and coordinated by AFL-CIO COPE, but each international union had the responsibility of implementing among their membership and in their best way possible. Well, as you know, we had a very heavy membership in Massachusetts--the G. E. Plants in Lynn and we had the Westinghouse Plants in Springfield, Massachusetts. We had a considerable membership in the State of Massachusetts. I was amazed at his detailed knowledge of the State as well as personalities. His knowledge of the personalities of the officers, particularly local union officers of our international was almost as great as mine and it was my job to know the men, to work with them. He was in a hurry that day, he was running behind on his schedule, and I was impressed with his conciseness. I had transacted my business with him, was in and out within 15 or 20 minutes.

LESTER: Was this first meeting in Washington?

WEAVER: In Washington, in his office. This meeting left a lasting impression on me of the kind of mind that he had and there is another characteristic that was evident at that time which became much more evident to me after he became President. It was his instinctive good manners, as natural as the clothes that he had on.

LESTER: I think that impressed a lot of people.

WEAVER: Yes, his good manners with a kind of shyness which I felt were extremely attractive.

LESTER Now George, you said you were dealing with him on legislative matters; was there any particular piece of legislation that you can recall?

WEAVER: Well yes, we had another problem in the Westinghouse Plant in Springfield, Massachusetts, which was one of the major industries in Springfield. An old plant, and Westinghouse had built a new installation in Columbus, Ohio, during the Korean War that, at this time (which would be about 1959) was operating at about 35 or 40% of capacity. They decided to shift the overwhelming majority of their production from Springfield, Massachusetts to Columbus, Ohio, and we were having difficulties with the company in working out what we thought were equitable transfer arrangements for their employees and the problems that are attendant to a company moving from one location to the other. We could not quarrel with the decision of the company from a purely productive point of view because the productivity of the new plant was so much greater than the old plant, but we did quarrel seriously with them in regard to the manner and method in which they were effecting this transaction.

LESTER: Under your agreement they didn't have any right to transfer, or did they?

WEAVER: They did not have right to transfer seniority and this was, of course, the big rub. Well, Senator Kennedy understood this immediately and agreed to meet with our people in an attempt to devise legislation which did not bear fruit, except again to demonstrate the quick capacity to understand the problem and the right kind of instincts.

LESTER: Did you deal directly, or did you deal often through Ralph Dungan or somebody in his office?

WEAVER: Well, on this matter Jim Carey and I went up to see him directly. My dealings with Ralph Dungan really began in a meaningful kind of way during the campaign in 1960. I had met Ralph before but had not had any extensive dealings with him until the campaign of 1960.

LESTER: Before we get to the campaign, is there anything else in your meetings with Senator Kennedy that you want to bring out?

WEAVER: Well yes, once during the campaign, and the pre-convention campaign of 1960, our union was supporting and fairly well committed to Senator Symington and I met Senator Kennedy at a meeting in New York.

LESTER: When was this, about May or June?

WEAVER: This was about May, the first part of May or earlier. It was probably earlier. I remember when I realized that he would be on the platform. I had a feeling of trepidation; I wasn't too



sure how I was going to handle it because he, I think, had been a very close friend of Jim Carey, President of the IUE. My dealings with him had always been very pleasant. I met him at a little reception before the meeting. Those who were sitting on the speakers' platform were convened in a room. He was the soul of graciousness and kidded me a couple of times about losing our support, while at the same time expressing his admiration for Senator Symington and what a good man he was. This characterized one of his best qualities which was really manifested to the country as a whole after his election. To my knowledge, there was never any question about whom you had supported before or after the election. It was a question of whether you could do the job.

LESTER: George, were you at the convention?

WEAVER: Yes, I was a delegate from the District of Columbia as I will be this year. At the convention, of course, we were still supporting Senator Symington, and the nomination was clinched, however, before we were reached on the roll call.

LESTER: Yes, because you came after the States.

WEAVER: Yes, well the District of Columbia delegation was in a very peculiar position because there were three or four supporting Senator Kennedy and the delegation had been elected to support Senator Humphrey. We ran on the Humphrey ticket in the primary in the District. Of course, when Senator Humphrey

withdrew, he freed the delegation but there was a very strong feeling among quite a few, who partly for tactical reasons were clinging to the loyalty of Senator Humphrey, and I must say it was a rather confused situation there.

LESTER: Now during the campaign, George, did you meet with the President on any occasion much?

WEAVER: Yes, on several occasions, always with groups. My efforts during the campaign were largely involved with working with Sargent Shriver. However, I had a couple of contacts with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. I worked on a couple of projects that had been suggested by Arthur Goldberg to Bobby.

LESTER: Then after, was there anything else up to the period of the time of the election? Did you have any special contact or dealings with Senator Kennedy?

WEAVER: No, I can't recall, and I know I would remember. There weren't any special occasions. They were generally meetings with small groups that were discussing some problem point in the campaign where it was anticipated we could be helpful.

LESTER: Then after the election, when was the next time you were in contact with Senator Kennedy?

WEAVER: After the election I went over to see President-elect Kennedy, then with the designated Secretary of Labor, Arthur Goldberg.

LESTER: This was after Arthur had been accepted?

WEAVER: Yes, he had recommended me along with Esther Peterson and Charlie Donahue. At that time I think we were the three that he had recommended, and Bill Wirtz, four were recommended for appointment. I saw the President for a few minutes after he was through discussing several matters with Arthur Goldberg. I was sitting out in another room at his house in Georgetown and I was struck because I had, I think, anticipated seeing a man a little careworn at this time because he had been conducting a protracted series of meetings, and yet he seemed as fresh as I had ever seen him.

LESTER: I think on most occasions when people had seen him, he did have that appearance. George, would you deal with the chronological order and sequence of the next time you met with the President?

WEAVER: The next time I met with the President other than just to have the opportunity of shaking hands with him was during the Inaugural period. The next time I met with him was in February of 1961. I was originally appointed as Assistant to the Secretary until George Lodge, my predecessor, completed his term as Chairman of the Governing Body in the International Labor Organization in June. In February, 1961, Arthur Goldberg received a call from the White House requesting my services on a mission to the West Indies, to Trinidad, for the purpose of completing the negotiations on the base agreement and signing the agreement. It was part work and part social as these exercises generally are. Jock Whitney, former Ambassador to

England, who had initiated the negotiations during his tenure as Ambassador, was Chairman of the delegation. I agreed to go; in fact, I was delighted at the opportunity. We went down for a few days and completed the preliminaries and formalities in signing the agreement and came back. We were notified that we would see the President on the Tuesday following our return. I think we got back on Sunday. We worked Sunday and Monday preparing a report for the President. We were ushered in to see him that Tuesday morning and within a minute after the initial preliminaries were over, he plunged right to the heart of some of the sticky points in the agreement, which was as impressive a demonstration of being on top of the job as I had ever seen. Very frankly, I didn't expect it and I don't think any of the other members of the delegation, with the possible exception of Ambassador Whitney, who had previously talked and worked with him over this agreement, expected it either.

LESTER: You didn't think anybody else had talked to him in advance either?

WEAVER: Well, after leaving I was so curious about it that I called a friend. (in fact, Andy Hatcher on his staff). I expressed to Andy my amazement and admiration at the performance of the President and asked Andy flatly how much briefing had he before this meeting. Andy said to the best of his knowledge there had been a one page memorandum reminding the President that we were

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coming in and that we had completed the agreement. The interesting point to me, and I pursued this question because I was genuinely curious when I realized it, was that he had also dealt with this problem in some detail as a Senator. It was my first indication of the carry-over and very valuable carry-over of an active Senator or Congressman into the White House. We have seen some of the same with President Johnson. This ability to get to the heart of a problem and to see the bugs, ask the tough questions, is what always impressed me about him.

LESTER: Apparently this incident that you give was typical of his ability to retain everything that he worked on, and showed that even at a great distance he could keep it at his command.

WEAVER: I remember another experience that I had with him which was very amusing; I got quite a bang out of it. Also early on in his Administration, Prime Minister Adoula of the Belgian Congo visited the United States, and I was invited to a luncheon the President had for him. I had met Mr. Adoula when he was a trade unionist, before the Congo had received its independence. In fact, he served on a Committee I had the privilege of chairing in the ILO, which also was his first time out of the Congo. We hadn't seen each other since then and in going through the line Adoula spied me, remembered me, jumped out of line and threw his arms around me. I noticed the President looking a little startled, I think, and then with a twinkle in his eye. I hadn't gotten back to the office long before I had a telephone call from the White

House and there was a question--where did you meet Adoula? This also clicked in my mind that it had registered in the President's mind and he was curious about the former relationship and how it came about. I watched at this luncheon very closely and recognized his capacity to establish a quick rapport with leaders from different environments, different races, and speaking different tongues.

LESTER: Did he conduct all of these conversations in English?

WEAVER: No, Adoula speaks virtually no English. It was all done through an interpreter. To me this is one of the tests of the ability of one to establish rapport, if you can do it through an interpreter. There was another factor. I discovered this from another visitor, a head of State whom I had also known back during trade union days. He had a meeting with the President. I chatted with him at a reception that evening and--

LESTER: You want to give a name, George?

WEAVER: It was President Nyerere of Tanganyika and his reaction to the President was that you can trust him. It was said very simply but it was the impression that this was something he meant. It wasn't said before a group, just he and I were talking.

LESTER: You think it was because of the President's frankness in dealing with him, not seeming to keep anything back or was it a personality trait?

WEAVER: I think it was a personality trait, but the capacity for frankness was an integral part of his personality trait and his capacity to make you feel at ease. The quickness with which he adjusted himself to a situation was even unplanned. For example, we had a very important trade unionist here from Austria, a very important member of the dominant political party who at that time was the opposition. He was fighting for some principles which he subsequently won. We recognized it as a sticky situation. That day the President was signing an Executive Order which provided for collective bargaining of government employees. We had this gentleman here visiting in the Department. He had been in to see Secretary Goldberg and on the spur of the moment Secretary Goldberg thought it would be a good idea for him to come over to the White House and witness this ceremony. Well, I was a little more conscious of the protocol as well as security requirements at the White House than Secretary Goldberg was. When he suggested this, I said yes, but with a feeling of trepidation of how we were going to work it out. Well, we worked it out through John Leslie, our Information Officer. He rode over in the car with us, although I wasn't sure we were going to be able to get him in, but we did. It was a large group that was to witness the signing, most of them trade unionists, in addition to the Congressmen and Senators who had over the years showed a great interest in government workers. I would imagine there were 50 in the room. We were standing in one corner of the fish room waiting for the President to get through with the appointment he had in the office. I assumed that we

would be summoned into the President's office and stand around the desk as normal. Secretary Goldberg had gone out of the room, I thought he had gone out to check on the President's timing and we looked up and the President walked in another door. He was in the midst of this group shaking hands; I thought this Austrian friend of ours would swallow his back teeth because of the informality of it, I think, sort of shocked him. At this time Secretary Goldberg came back into the room and began to introduce the President around and then we got to this gentleman, he introduced him to the President as a visitor from Austria. The President was very cordial as if it was the expected thing to find a foreign visitor with this group. He invited us in the office and I escorted the gentleman from Austria in. As the President was signing the bill and passing the pens out, he passed the second one out to him. Of course, we got a picture of it and this man was greatly thrilled but was gentlemanly and astute enough not to use the picture because it could have been embarrassing internationally for us in view of the political differences that were going on. Then the President asked us to stay back. We stayed back for about ten minutes and he questioned him very closely about the conditions under which the government workers in Austria bargain. The questions were very pointed, very intelligent. This gentleman left there feeling very reassured of the new young leadership in the White House.

LESTER: George, did you usually go over with Arthur Goldberg or did you go over on some occasions by yourself or with some of these foreign people?



WEAVER: Well on some occasions by myself, in fact, this picture here of David Morse was taken about a month before the President's assassination and this was the one time that I sensed and realized he was in pain.

LESTER: Oh, at this time, one month before the assassination?

WEAVER: Yes, at this time if you remember, the President's method of terminating an interview was to press a buzzer under the coffee table in front of him, which was a signal for photographers to come in. I had been in the office and watched him do this several times and he always had done it very unobtrusively. This day he asked me--I was sitting on the side next to the coffee table which was near the button--if I would press the button. He was obviously in pain that day and when he escorted us to the door he held his back and there were lines on his face. It was the only time that I ever remembered seeing him either overly weary or seeming to be in pain.

LESTER: I know that because I had a ruptured disc and I had an operation. I was in his office before then and I was wearing a brace. He asked me about it, at that time he tapped his hip back here and said he was wearing one, but he wasn't in pain at that time, that was back in February, March 1961.

WEAVER: Another conversation I'll never forget and one that indicated another dimension of the President was a State dinner for Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast. It was a very elegant occasion. Madame Houphouet-Boigny is, I think one of the world's

most beautiful and best dressed women. She and the President's wife made a very handsome pair that night. It was a rather gay but yet elegantly formal occasion. The toasts had been very appropriate on both sides, and over coffee, before going in for the performance, I was moving from one room to the other. He was also, and we sort of bumped into each other. We chatted for a few minutes and here again his knowledge of odd facets of government struck me. He began to discuss the coming ILO Conference and he discussed it in terms of the great value that the ILO has been to working men and women, particularly in developing countries. But he also discussed the potentiality that it holds for us as a forum in which we can meet leaders of other levels. He was very much aware of the tripartite character of the ILO and the potentials it holds for us.

LESTER: George, did you get any impression of how much he knew about individual countries?

WEAVER: I had the impression he knew about the leaders of individual countries in a detailed kind of way. I would say we talked probably ten minutes before somebody else joined us.

LESTER: You didn't have any occasion to brief him on people in advance of meetings with him?

WEAVER: No.

LESTER: Who in the White House worked particularly in this area?

WEAVER: Ralph Dungan worked in this area, particularly in the Alliance for Progress; on several of the ILO problems, McGeorge Bundy followed through. I would say the majority of the work from this Bureau flowed through Ralph Dungan.

LESTER: Was Ralph Dungan present often when you met with the President?

WEAVER: I don't think Ralph ever was present.

LESTER: Did you have other occasions to meet with the President with foreign dignitaries in which anything special occurred that you can recall?

WEAVER: No, the other occasions were always with large groups, the luncheons or dinners. When Nyerere was there, the President had a meeting with a task force on South Africa of which I was a part. This was in the summer of 1963, in July of 1963. He asked us to stand by while he was meeting with Nyerere because South Africa was one of the questions that he knew President Nyerere was going to discuss. This was a very interesting experience for me because it provided an opportunity to see the ability of the President to make a decision without wrestling and fighting with a problem, getting the facts from both sides, weighing and making a decision. He had the capacity to get to the essence and cut out the superfluous.

LESTER: George, did he call you up on the telephone very much directly?

WEAVER: No, I only had one telephone call from him and I was so awed that it is hard to remember what he called me about.

LESTER: Did he call you at your office or at home?

WEAVER: No, he called me here in the office and it was to express his appreciation of the way the U. S. delegation handled itself in the ILO in 1963, which was a very rough session. It was when the South African issue first burst upon us.

LESTER: George, could you tell what sources of information that he got his information from, in addition to the newspapers?

WEAVER: His source of information on this was dispatches from the State Department which were brought to his attention because this represented a new problem. It was very apparent that it would have to be dealt with in all of the U. N. agencies as well as a change in government policy regarding South Africa.

LESTER: In his conversations with Morse, just a month or so before his assassination, was there anything special in that discussion?

WEAVER: No, except here again he demonstrated to Morse his detailed knowledge of the labor programs in the Alliance for Progress, and the discussion revolved around how the programs of the ILO and the U. S. Government could be better coordinated and better meshed and also concerned recognition of some of the political problems that Morse faces as Director-General of the ILO.

LESTER: You said that Ralph Dungan wasn't at any of these meetings. Ralph must have kept himself pretty well briefed, didn't he?

WEAVER: Oh, yes, we saw to it that Ralph stayed briefed, and we kept in very close touch with Ralph. Another very important activity that we became involved in was the development of the labor program for the Alliance for Progress. He called on Goldberg to see what more the government could be doing as well as the labor movement, and out of it has grown a very substantial program of collaboration between the AFL-CIO and the Government of Latin America. Another incident comes to mind in regards to this program. One important facet of the program is bringing Latin American trade unionists to the U. S. for training, then they go back and work in their countries of origin. The President received the first graduating group.

LESTER: At the White House?

WEAVER: At the White House in the rose garden. It was a very memorable occasion for the graduates as well as for us who had a chance to observe it. Here again we saw this surefooted instinct of his of saying and doing the right thing at the right time. He said a few words, but more important than his saying a few words, he stepped off the podium in the rose garden and walked around and shook hands. I am sure there were a lot of hands that weren't washed for several days after that.

LESTER: George, you didn't have any particular occasion to operate between the President and the trade union movement as such on more general matters than just the international and ILO matters?

WEAVER: No, because I have stuck pretty close to my own knitting since I have been on this job.

LESTER: George, were there any other occasions that you haven't discussed when you met with the President and in which there was anything special that came out of the meeting?

WEAVER: No, I can't think of any other occasions with the President.

LESTER: You saw him occasionally for over a period of time beginning while he was a Senator and then pretty much through his presidency, including up to the last month before his death.

WEAVER: Yes.

LESTER: I was wondering whether out of that you got any impression of change either in personality or the way he handled things or his attitude or his facility to grapple with the problems over this period of time. What was it, four or five years?

WEAVER: Five or six years. Yes, I did. My impressions changed and there were several facets. One facet occurred when I was just meeting him casually as one does in Washington with Senators and Congressmen at receptions and so forth, or at meetings. He made no impression on me as a Congressman and as a young Senator. I

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met him a couple of times in the Senate dining room. I remember once I was having lunch with Senator Symington; he introduced me. I thought of him as a very handsome young man and that was it. My respect for him as an operating and practicing politician became fixed during the campaign, both pre-convention and the primary, as well as the campaign after the convention. I then observed his handling of men of much greater age and longer years of experience in the party. During the period between the election and the inauguration, which as one looks back upon it, could have been the making or breaking of the beginning of his Administration. It was handled with great deftness and I began to sense this in talking to disappointed ones as well as those who had been tapped or whose friends had been tapped. Then, of course, I was sold after that inaugural address. I remember my wife and I were standing in the stands, and I was wearing a top hat I had borrowed from my brother-in-law, and a morning coat which was a relic of my brother's wedding. I was about frozen and didn't realize how cold it was until after he had finished his speech. I think my wife and I both were really captured from that moment on. I would say the characteristic that impressed me each time I saw him, particularly after October 1962, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, was one of maturity to the point that during the last times I saw him I never thought about age and the fact that he was younger than I was. It just never entered my mind, and I must say at the outset this was fairly close to the top of my consciousness. I guess you would summarize it as growth in a

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subtle sort of imperceptible way but one that I was conscious of because I did not see him that often.

LESTER: George, after his death did you have any occasion to talk much with people who had dealt with him such as some of these leaders from abroad, and get any further impressions from them?

WEAVER: Oh, yes, my next trip abroad after his death was in December. I dedicated a housing project, the John F. Kennedy Housing Project in Mexico City, on December 4, which was immediately after his death, and I had no feeling of moving into a different environment because Mexico City had the same air of shock, disbelief, and grief that we had here. In fact, they had cut out their television programs and used ours. I stayed with Tom Mann, who was our Ambassador, and some of the stories he told me were similar to ours here. I also participated during those two days I was there in two memorial services for him, one at the ORIT, which is the Latin American Inter-Regional Labor Organization, and the other was at one of the local unions. They left a tremendous impression on my mind which was further confirmed in each other country I visited in that immediate period, of the same feeling of loss and disbelief that we had in this country.

LESTER: I was wondering, subsequent to that in your travels, was there anything else in connection with President Kennedy's death, the other countries' impressions or people that you talked with, particularly in the trade union movement?



WEAVER: Yes, there was a sort of plateau in our relationships with other countries because I think the one impression he implanted in people, particularly in developing countries was that of understanding their problems.

LESTER: How did this get across, George, how much from the leaders and people in their country, how much from newspapers, other meetings, how much from his speeches?

WEAVER: I think it was a combination of all of these elements, with the more important being his speeches.

LESTER: Did his speeches just get credit? Was there any broadcasting of them?

WEAVER: Both. The Voice of America's improved quality was almost immediately noticeable after Ed Murrow took over. His speeches were re-broadcast, particularly in the English speaking world, and were heard as they were given, without any translation. The speeches got across. In the African and Asian countries his sincerity, or feeling of his sincerity on civil rights, got across. The recognition of that combination of his and Bobby's efforts really got across to the point that today, instead of this being one of our greatest burdens for those who are responsible for the conduct of our relationships in the international forums, there is an understanding about this. In the recent ILO meeting in June, which took place right after the Civil Rights Legislation was passed, we were complimented and held up as an example of what government should

do. This is a very interesting experience and it was, I think, doubly meaningful--the fact that President Johnson had driven so hard and pushed his program so hard, with the recognition that he was a Southerner. I don't think it was expected as much abroad as it was at home. I don't think there was recognition of his commitment, his deepseated commitment to this program as it is here at home. This got across, but then after Cuba, I think, was the turning point in the attitude of many of the leaders in the countries with which I deal in the ILO and in other forums. I think this was the turning point in terms of confidence.

LESTER: Then they really had confidence in the way he handled the whole operation?

WEAVER: Yes.

LESTER: Would you say, George, in the groups that you were dealing with, ranging all the way from trade unionists to the leaders of these countries, were there any differences in the feelings toward Kennedy? Trade union movement, say as against political leaders in a sense of feeling that he was for them, or was it pretty much the same? I suppose that the head of a country might be different, based on looking at the thing from a different aspect, I was wondering whether you noticed any difference in attitudes toward Kennedy as the President in this country, to the man in the street, the working man or against the leaders.

WEAVER: Well, I would say that there would not be as great a difference in most of the countries abroad, particularly the developing countries

abroad because they are too close, I mean there isn't the gulf between the trade union leaders and the politician. Quite often they're the same. The issues that sharply divide us in serious political matters are very rarely that serious in most of these other countries.

LESTER: It wouldn't make any difference age-wise either?

WEAVER: No, because the developing countries are really the haven for the young man. I am 52, but I'm an old man sitting across the table with many of them, many of whom are in their 20's and 30's. He was really a contemporary of theirs.

LESTER: Is there anything else, George, that you want to discuss that we haven't covered yet?

WEAVER: Well, there is only one other point and it flows from the last question. I think this is present as much among the youth as well as the younger adults in this country as it is abroad. The fact that President Kennedy left a legacy to youth that I think will be important, and ideals and goals for younger people abroad as well as at home, to aspire to, probably for half a century to come.

LESTER: Well, he had a great facility for inspiring people, there is no doubt about that.

WEAVER: He was a romantic figure, elegant, witty, tough minded, a romantic figure of our time.

LESTER: George, how many of his press conferences got broadcast?

WEAVER: The press conferences were broadcast considerably. Of course, Telstar provided the same characteristics that we have of television and introduced him to television, particularly in Europe. The impact that Mrs. Kennedy made can't be overlooked, I think, particularly in Europe and in Asia. I am very sorry that they did not get a chance to visit Africa.

LESTER: In what way did she make an impact?

WEAVER: Well, I think first on account of her elegance.

LESTER: You mean her appearance and her dignity?

WEAVER: No, elegance in the fullest sense of the word that would include appearance, dignity, her interest in people, art and in culture. I think that this got through, as well as the new elements that she reintroduced to the White House, to the Washington scene, to government and bringing art into government and making it an integral part of our governmental culture. I think these are some of the things I would include in the term elegant.

LESTER: How about in her visits?

WEAVER: Her visits I think had a tremendous impact.

LESTER: George, there is one thing that the Library wanted to know, I asked you about it earlier, but I think perhaps it should be on the record. They want me to ask whether you played any role in drafting or executing the President's Executive Order on Equal Employment Opportunity, and whether you had any conversations with the President on this matter.

WEAVER: No, I didn't play any role in the implementation, I sat with Charlie Donahue and Abe Fortas' people in the earlier days of the Administration in going over the draft of the order. I met with a small group that met with the then Vice President Johnson several times at the beginning of the administration of the order, but I soon was forced to withdraw from this activity because of the press of my other duties. I never discussed this with the President after he became President. I did discuss this several times with groups of civil rights leaders during the period when he was Senator and once after he became a candidate.

LESTER: They also asked me whether you were involved in the civil rights movement with Arthur Goldberg or Bill Wirtz?

WEAVER: Well, I've been involved in a very indirect way, as matters come up in staff meetings or in discussions with them. I have had a considerable background in the civil rights area in the labor movement, which both Secretaries Goldberg and Wirtz have drawn upon from time to time, but with the rapidity of events in the civil rights field, I soon found myself as one of last year's experts.

LESTER: Well, you pretty much had your own area of operation and that kept you busy, I guess?

WEAVER: Very much.

LESTER: George, unless you have something else I think I have covered the questions I had.

WEAVER: No, I can't think of anything else, this has been a very thorough series of questions.

*Richard A. Lester - George F. Weaver*