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Ellender, a Senator from Louisiana (1937-1972), discusses agricultural legislation during the Kennedy administration, international policy regarding Russia, and presidential appointments, among other issues.

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Allen J. Ellender

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Allen J. Ellender

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Oral History Interview

with

SENATOR ALLEN J. ELLENDER

August 29, 1967

Washington, D.C.

By Larry Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Senator Ellender, you'd been talking a while ago about your first memories of John Kennedy as a child and your relationship with the family. Would you comment on that?

ELLENDER: Well, I came to Congress, to the Senate in 1937, and I had occasion to meet many of the high officials in government at the time. Among them, of course, was President Kennedy's father. I was invited to visit his home on several occasions at dinner, and I very well recollect meeting most of the Kennedy children at the time. And I'm sure among them was the late President, as well as Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] and, I think, one or two of the girls. I had quite a few meetings with his father later. Of course, he was an official and held a high position here in Washington, and later on, when he became Ambassador in London, I also had occasion to speak with him on quite a few occasions.

HACKMAN: What type of fellow was Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] and can you remember anything about the relationships in the family?

ELLENDER: Well, he was a very kind man; he was fond of his children. I can well remember that. And he was a lovable character, and I know that he cared for his

children a good deal, so did the wife. In other words, I soon learned from him and his wife that they made their children feel they were wanted. And, that's why, in my opinion, the Kennedy clan has turned out to be such fine people - because of the affection that was showered on the family by the father and the mother. And there was no such thing in that family as child delinquency. And I say that not because they were wealthy; they had all they desired. But it would seem to me that in respect to the Kennedy family, there was then, and I'm sure there is now, love and affection between and among the entire family. And to me, it's something that should be done in all families.

HACKMAN: Carry your relationship on, did you have any other contact with John Kennedy previous to the time he came to the Senate?

ELLENDER: No, no, except as I've said, I can well remember meeting the children, but I wouldn't say that I met too frequently with any of them, that is, on a personal basis. It was more or less in the family.

HACKMAN: What do you recall then about your early impressions of Kennedy as a Senator?

ELLENDER: Well, the Senator wasn't very active in debate; he didn't sponsor too many bills. One of the bills in particular that I recall him handling very well was a labor bill. He served on the Labor Committee. But there is one thing about the late President; whenever he spoke, people stood there and listened to him. He was very fluent, and he used excellent English, and he thought clearly and expressed himself well. And I can well remember the first big debate that he entered into on some labor bill, I can't remember the particulars of it, but he was very successful in warding off criticism and in fighting off amendments, so that the bill came out almost as the Committee desired it to be enacted. And he was very effective in that. And now, I add, I well remember talking to the late President quite often about agricultural legislation.

HACKMAN: This was while he was in the Senate?

ELLENDER: Oh, yes. I was chairman of the Committee, and we had a good deal of respect for each other.

We talked quite frequently. I had him to lunch several times in my hideout in the Capitol, and I had occasion to talk to him quite a few times. And I spoke to him about agriculture, but somehow I was not too successful in having him to agree with my philosophy on agriculture. And I may say that in most of the cases he voted against me. But he was frank about it, and he said why. I could well understand that the Northeast is not an agricultural section of our country, and I won't say that he was against subsidies that were paid to the farmer - that is by way of price supports - but we had quite a few lengthy discussions about it, but I could never get him to agree to go along with me on all of these farm programs that we had before the Congress while he was Senator.

HACKMAN: I'd heard that in that early period he frequently paid attention to Senator Clinton Anderson on agriculture. Do you know if this was so at all?

ELLENDER: Well, to some extent, but I can't speak…. I thought that his reasons for not being for the farmer in the way I thought he should be was that he thought the farmer should be free to grow what he desired, and that was, I think, the bone of his contention. That, of course, was more or less in line at the time with the thinking of the American Farm Bureau of which Senator Clinton Anderson, whom you just mentioned, was not only a member, but I believe he thought along the same lines. The Farm Bureau had a different version of farm legislation than what I had, but, as I argued with the late President, we all reached the same goal in a different way. But even the program submitted by the American Farm Bureau envisioned some kind of subsidy to keep land out of production.

HACKMAN: Right, right. Did you notice any change in his stand on agriculture, let's say, particularly after '56 and as the election year of 1960 approached?

ELLENDER: Well, not very much, until after he became President, and if you desire, I could tell you what happened.

HACKMAN: Fine.

ELLENDER: After he became President, he became very much interested in agriculture. And as chairman of the Committee, I had quite a few discussions with him.

And he was for the farm programs as President, more so than he was as a Senator. And of course, what changed his mind, I presume, is the fact that he was President, and the fact that he had to consider the problem nationwide. Some of his leaders, why, they advocated the farm program, as a matter of fact, the one that's now on the statute books.

HACKMAN: Right.

ELLENDER: And I can well remember him calling me in and our discussing the matter, and he told me that he thought that the program that we had worked out was a good one, and that he hoped that I would do all I could to promote it. And I did, except in one instance, and that was in respect to cotton. And I'll never forget, after the Congress completed its work on the bill and it was sent to the White House for his signature, most of the members of both committees - in the House and in the Senate - were invited to be present when the President attached his signature to the bill. And just before he signed the bill in the presence of all the members of the committees and the press, I made a remark that caused quite a bit of laughter. I told him that I was sorry that he didn't support me before, but that since he became President he attached his signature to a bill which he opposed while he was a Senator - that is, in principle. And of course, that created quite a little stir around there, and he took it good naturedly and responded by saying, in effect, that now he was President, he represented more people than he did in Massachusetts.

HACKMAN: In other words then, his early position was probably a regional position. How knowledgeable was he on agriculture while he was in the Senate?

ELLENDER: I don't believe he knew too much about it except that the commodities were produced and put on the table for use. Insofar as growing it and insofar as knowing anything about any of the programs that we started back in 1937, when he was just a boy, I don't believe that he paid much attention to that. He was, I don't know, engaged rare as a philosopher in different forms of government worldwide, and he was a great student in American history and also European - in fact, worldwide. And, I don't believe that he spent much time in reading over any of these bills or the reports, or even took the time

to study agriculture because he never came in contact with farmers except, probably, after he became President and after he traveled throughout the country. And I can see that, in a measure, he didn't have to because in the Northeast you have a more or less conservative element there, and farming is more or less a sideline. You don't have much of it except in dairying. But in farming as a whole, I think that what prompted him to vote against some of these measures is that the cost of cattle feed would be increased by providing subsidies for the farmers. And from a regional standpoint, why, he followed others in that area of the country who took like positions except probably three or four of them, such as Senator Aiken [George D. Aiken] who was on the Committee. But, generally speaking, the Senator, I'm sure, followed the views of the people of that area, that is the whole Northeast area, where, as all of us know, is not really and truly a large farming area.

HACKMAN: Did you ever remember discussing that issue with any of his staff? For instance, Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was from Nebraska; it always sort of puzzled me that he didn't have any more knowledge or impart any knowledge to the Senator.

ELLENDER: No, I don't recall talking…. He might have talked to me about it, but I don't remember. My only contacts that I remember were the contacts that I had with the late President himself while he was in the Senate. And of course, I sought his advice at times as to whether or not he would agree to support it if certain changes were made. But somehow I could never interest him.

HACKMAN: Right. In general, from your early memories of Kennedy, let's say in his early years in the Senate, how seriously do you think he took his job as a Senator?

ELLENDER: Well, one thing, he didn't engage in debates too many times. However, I understand he attended the meetings of the committees on which he served, and he was primarily interested in labor laws. He served on that committee. I think that that was the line in which he spent most of his time as far as I knew. As a matter of fact, as I've said a moment ago, the only active debates I saw him join in were related to labor legislation, housing, and things to assist the people

as a whole, the poor people. He was very much attracted with that. I soon learned that he was more or less a man of the people although he was grown in a surrounding where you couldn't say that he contacted many poor people. But yet, the sympathies in his heart went in that direction after he became Senator.

HACKMAN: One of his interests during the period he was in the Senate was in foreign affairs. We've been talking about agriculture, do you remember ever discussing what eventually became the Food for Peace concept with him while he was in the Senate?

ELLENDER: Well, insofar as that was concerned, he supported that legislation, as I recall, wherein we assisted the hungry of the world. He was for that. But the only thing is that, as I recall, all of this surplus food was on hand, and that's what gave rise to the Congress passing legislation - to prevent the vast accumulation of the surplus food. But insofar as the distribution of that food was concerned to needy people in our country and also to people abroad, as I recall, he was all for that.

HACKMAN: You at that time were on the Appropriations Committee and worked with the appropriations on foreign aid. Do you remember discussing that issue with him at that time? He always, at least as 1960 approached, was pushing for long term appropriations which was something that you were

inclined to disagree with him on.

ELLENDER: Well, that was in the foreign aid field. Oh yes, we disagreed a great deal on that. As a matter of fact, I have no excuse to make, I've been a foe of foreign aid now for the past seventeen years. I was for technical assistance, so was he. But in addition, he was for whatever was asked for by the President, by the Executive, in order to carry on a foreign aid program among the peoples of the world. There is no doubt about that, that he was all for that. And of course, we often clashed on that issue. That is, he participated now and then when the programs were up for discussion, but he took no active part in actually promoting the bills. He simply participated in debate and voted, I'm sure, his convictions on the issue.

HACKMAN: He was also a member of the Government Operations Committee, and at one time was chairman of the Subcommittee on Reorganization, and along with some of the recommendations of the Hoover Commission, he recommended some changes in accounting and budgeting procedures. Do you remember ever discussing that with him?

ELLENDER: No. Well, I don't remember specifically of discussing it with him, but I know of his activity on that Committee. Senator McClellan [John L. McClellan], whom he respected very much, was a member of that, and his brother Robert, Bobby for short, was chief counsel on that Committee at the time, as I recall. And he took a very active interest in the work of this committee and in the reorganization of our government. And I do recall that he participated quite actively in some of those debates in order to more or less reform the government, particularly the financial end of it– in other words, to make it more workable.

HACKMAN: Moving on to something else, on the civil rights issue while he was in the Senate. In '57 he'd voted for the jury trial amendment in that legislation, and he'd also voted to send the bill through Senator Eastland's [James O. Eastland] Judiciary Committee when a number of people were urging not to go that route. Do you recall any conversations with him at that time in attempts to get him to vote in this manner?

ELLENDER: No. No, I never discussed any civil rights legislation in particular with him because I knew his attitude. That is, because of certain speeches he made and statements he made, I realized that it was almost impossible to have him think as we Southerners did. But on a question of procedure as to where the bill should be lodged and all of that, it's my belief that his close association with Senator Eastland, who was Chairman of this Committee, and McClellan, who was also on that Committee - I think it's entirely possible that McClellan, in particular, probably suggested it to him. The fact that he was for regular procedure would lead me to believe that,

instead of bypassing the Judiciary Committee, as was later done, and many times it was done - at one time he thought, and I think voted, as you said, against the wishes of other civil rights advocates - his idea was to give the Committee a full opportunity

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to consider the bill as it came from the House. And as I said, I have no doubt but that he might have been influenced in voting as he did on matters of procedure because of his close association particularly with McClellan as well as Jim Eastland, who were both members of the Judiciary Committee of the Senate that handled all of the civil rights legislation.

HACKMAN: It's frequently been said that when Kennedy was in the Senate, his relationship with some of the Southern Senators was pretty good for somebody coming from a liberal northern state. Is that so?

ELLENDER: He was a very amiable fellow with a lot of understanding. I had a hunch that on many occasions if it had been left to him, he might have voted a little differently from the way he did, but realizing that the entire region where he came from was more or less for the civil rights bills, that he voted because many of his people desired it, don't you see. And of course, that's the way of politics. I've often said that whenever politics get into a problem of that kind, the people dealing with those problems seem to lose their sense of reason. And oftentimes, instead of following their own views, their own ideas, they are prone to follow the dictates of some leaders in their area. And even with the President, why, he wasn't immune from that as many others were not on the Senate floor at the time.

HACKMAN: Moving on from the Senate as 1960 approached, what were your feelings toward Senator Kennedy as a presidential candidate?

ELLENDER: Well, I want to be perfectly frank in saying this, that when he started out his campaign, I didn't think he had a chance to be elected president. But after he engaged in debate with Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] on television, I changed my mind, as many other Americans did. He was brilliant, and he always knew what he was talking about. He was a sharp debater, and well informed. And at the time, I thought that he thought problems through, and he made it clear to the people what he stood for. Of course, that won him many friends.

HACKMAN: Previous to the Convention while there were still a number of candidates up for the possible nomination, did the Kennedy people approach you in that period in

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any attempt to get your support?

ELLENDER: Well, they knew that I was a Democrat. They knew that the state of Louisiana usually voted Democratic, and they approached me in…. I don't mean to say now that this was political in nature, but I recall that when there was a big meeting here on Capitol Hill of the Senators' backers, Bobby, who was his manager, suggested that I cook a meal for all of the people who had come in to attend these functions. And I agreed to do so. And I remember making an oyster jambalaya which was served to quite a few people who were for Kennedy. As a matter of fact, I talked Kennedy from there on, and particularly after I heard these debates on television. Now, you know I served with Vice President Nixon as a Senator, but I didn't believe at the time, in fact when he was nominated, I didn't think he was presidential caliber by any means. Not because he was so much a Republican, but as a man, I didn't think that he was equal to the occasion of being president. Of course, that spurred me on to assist, the best way I could, President Kennedy. But I wish to say that I didn't make too many speeches.

I've been in politics now for over fifty-three years, and I find it pretty hard to hoe my own row in politics when I start being for this man or that man for governor, or this man or that man for local office in my state. You make a lot of people mad. And from way back I started being on my own and not participating in too many political rows. I found it very beneficial, and for that reason, when the presidency came up, in fact ever since I've been in the Senate, I refrained from participating too loudly or too actively in any of these campaigns. But I made some exceptions, I made a few talks in Louisiana an behalf of the late President.

HACKMAN: Were the Kennedy people urging you to do this? What about the group in Louisiana? Some strength had developed—I believe a group called United Democrats with Camille Gravel and some of these people. What was your relationship to them?

ELLENDER: Well, not too close—that is, we talked. As you know, Camille Gravel later on became one of my opponents. Not that we didn't think alike in many instances, but in my opinion, he was more of a liberal than I thought a Louisianan should be. He was quite active in the state, and he was our state Committeeman. He had a lot of friends, but

at no time did I do anything to oppose his activities in behalf of the late President. He became very active, but I don't recall of him making any special effort to get me to support the late President, but I did it alone.

HACKMAN: You've mentioned previously about not getting involved in the governor's race. In 1959, let's see, that's when Jimmy Davis [James H. Davis] was running against DeLesseps Morrison. Was this typical that you stayed out of this?

ELLENDER: I never participated in any gubernatorial election except in 1936 when I ran for the Senate the first time. Under the law at that time, the governor, the lieutenant governor, and all the members of his cabinet ran on the same ticket as the congressmen and senators did. I got on that ticket, and of course, we supported each other. And then, the only offense that I did later, that is….When I say offense, I mean participated very mildly in a gubernatorial election, was when the late Earl Long was elected the second time. And all I did in that case was at his request. He asked me if I would simply announce to the people of Louisiana that I was going to vote for him for governor. Of course, I did that because I was for him. But to get out and actively campaign for anybody in particular for any local offices, I've never done it during my entire political career.

HACKMAN: Do you remember what your feelings were about the out-come of the 1960 presidential election in Louisiana? What did you think were the main factors?

ELLENDER: Oh, I don't recall all of that. The main fact of course was, in my opinion, in certain parts of the state, religion. You know, Louisiana's a state in which, I don't know, the people won't elect a Catholic. That's why DeLesseps S. Morrison was defeated the last time. He got a lot of votes there, but somehow the people will not elect a Catholic. Many, many good men who are Catholics offered for governor, but they were eventually defeated in the second primary. They might have got on top in the first primary, but…. And there's no doubt in my own mind but that the late President Kennedy lost many, many votes in Louisiana because he was a Catholic.

HACKMAN: You think that was more important, then, than the civil rights issue?

ELLENDER: Oh yes, I think so. I think so.

HACKMAN: Skipping back again before the '60 Convention, what was your relationship to the candidacy of other people, Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], Senator Symington [Stuart Symington, II], particularly Senator Johnson?

ELLENDER: Well, I didn't declare for anybody. I didn't say much about any particular candidate. Of course, I liked them all. I associated with them as senators. All of them were senators. At all of my parties in my hideout, that is, where I cooked a lot of food…. Every year, as you know, I cook food for them in which most of the senators participate. Like this year, for instance, I think I fed ninety-four or five senators, and I often had these candidates for president to break bread with me. President Johnson, of course, came over many times after he became President; he got a taste of it while he was a Senator, and he kept on after he became President. But, I enjoyed entertaining people like that, and it gives them a chance to get together and talk

about different things, you know. But I often invited them because they were members of the Senate, of course.

HACKMAN: Do you think the Gravel group, the United Democrats in Louisiana, were very important in creating support for Kennedy in the '60 election?

ELLENDER: Well, Gravel is a Catholic. He led that group. He tried his best, and there's no doubt but that he was able to obtain many votes. I don't recall when it was that Gravel took issues with the leading Democrats in advocating civil rights. After he did that, of course, he lost out a good deal of his support by being outward on the civil rights issue, and it was contrary to the thinking of the leading politicians of the state at that time. He got into a heap of trouble about it, and that's one reason, I'm sure, why he was ousted as Committeeman from Louisiana. There's no doubt about that.

HACKMAN: What were your feelings at the time about Senator Johnson's role in that campaign? Was he extremely important in Louisiana and the South?

ELLENDER: Well, the people in my area were very much disappointed in Johnson because of his change in attitude on the civil rights issue. And it's my belief that there was much said about it, and he got quite a few votes from this standpoint: Many voters were willing to forgive him for the statements he made, but felt that deep down if he became president, he might have a change of heart and not advocate civil rights to the extent that he did. And of course, after he became President for a short while he carried out the promises that were made by the late President Kennedy and the party as a whole. He made a grand success of carrying that out.

Now, a good many people wonder how it is that Johnson is able to carry out a program that the late president Kennedy was apparently unable to put through. Of course, my answer to that was simply this: Johnson was much more aggressive than the late President Kennedy. President Kennedy was a lovable character. He was easy going, and he didn't try to twist anybody's arm. I'm not saying now by indirection that Lyndon Johnson does that, but I've heard it often said that he does. But it's my belief that President Johnson was able to carry through the program advocated by the late President Kennedy because of the wave of emotionalism that followed the death, or the assassination of the late President.

For instance, in my case, I received quite a few letters from many of my constituents who wrote to me this: they said, "Now, Allen, we understand that you're against civil rights, you're against certain programs that were advocated by the late President Kennedy, but why don't you vote for them with Johnson in his memory, and let's put those laws on the statute books in memory of a great President." That was the tenor of the letters that I received after President Johnson became President and, of course, after the assassination. Except for that

state of mind of the people, this great wave of emotionalism that spread throughout the country, where I saw with my own eyes many people crying about the death of the President and all of that, I have no doubt in my own mind but that except for that wave of emotionalism, I doubt that the President would have been as successful in carrying out the promises that were made by the

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late President Kennedy—except for that situation. I have no doubt of that, and I think the President himself realized that.

HACKMAN: Talking about the comparative aggressiveness of the two, President Johnson and President Kennedy, was this also characteristic in the Senate of Senator Kennedy as not being extremely aggressive, it was more a personality thing than anything else?

ELLENDER: Yes, indeed. He came to you and explained his position or he'd give reasons why he thought you should be this way or that way. As a matter of fact, when I, on many occasions, appeared at the White House at the request of the late President with other members of the Senate to discuss various problems, there was a difference in his approach to that of President Johnson, much different. Of course, President Johnson has been in Congress, had been in Congress at the time, since 1937 when I came in; he was a member of the House; and he had much, much more experience than the late President Kennedy and knew the ropes, as it were, and knew whom to approach, and he knew what to do. President Kennedy, of course, was not so well acquainted with that, but even though he had been acquainted with that, but even though he had been acquainted with them, I don't believe that he had the driving power that Johnson possesses. In other words, he was not as aggressive. He didn't go to you and say, "Well now, I expect you to do this." Not that he said, "If you don't, you can expect punishment from me," or anything like that, but President Johnson has a peculiar way of getting people to work with him, and he's very successful at that. I believe that it's due partially to the fact that he does his homework; he knows what it's all about; and he doesn't spare time in getting people around him and explaining his position. He's a very strong advocate of that. Although President Johnson is not a lawyer, he's a good advocate, a very good advocate, very persuasive.

HACKMAN: Could Kennedy as a Senator have been a great deal more influential if he would have taken a little more aggressive approach do you think?

ELLENDER: I think so. I think so. He was a little too, I won't say timid, but he didn't like the approach

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of personal contact as did Johnson. He felt that if a cause was good,

he could carry it on through debate, through writing, and through speeches and win over people. I don't believe that he believed in pressuring people by any means.

HACKMAN: Did you ever discuss that with him as far as his approach as a Senator or as a President?

ELLENDER: No, I never did. But I could tell by his actions. You see, I've served under many presidents since 1937, and I know the approach of all of them, most of them. None were more aggressive that Johnson, and I don't know of any who were less aggressive than the late President Kennedy. When he believed in something, why, he presented it to his listeners in the hope that he could convince them in the ordinary way rather than by calling them aside and beginning to bargain with them. I believe in that respect that the late President Kennedy was a poor bargainer, although as time went on in the White House, I think he began to learn the ropes of politics and was more inclined to purl in politics now and then to get things done.

HACKMAN: Did you ever have the feeling while he was in the Senate that if he would have used some more experienced advisors he might have taken a different stance? He had a pretty young group of men around him at that time.

ELLENDER: Well, that's possible, but it's my belief that the late President Kennedy sought to carry out more or less the will of his people, and that's the general inclination of a politician who expects to be re-elected to office, and that is to work as closely as possible with his people. You take him on the civil rights issue: Although I believed that he sympathized a good deal with the views of many Southern Senators, yet, it might have hurt him politically if he had stood side by side with us. Of course I do know that Massachusetts, in fact that whole Northeast with very few exceptions, were for most of the civil rights bills that were enacted into law and those proposed.

HACKMAN: Moving on after the election and into the transition period, do you remember discussing the appointment of Secretary of Agriculture with President Kennedy?

ELLENDER: Well, not directly. I recall that before he was elected President—I mean took the oath of office— he asked me to meet him in New York City in conference to discuss all of this, and I was unable to go for some reason. I appointed a member of the Agriculture Committee staff to go and discuss the agricultural problems with him. That's what he wanted in particular, and later on when the time came to select a Secretary of Agriculture, I wasn't actually contacted by him, but some people, presumably who thought as he did and probably they were sent by him to me, asked me if I'd have any objections to -- I think there were two or three candidates under

consideration at the time.

HACKMAN: Fred Heinkel [Frederick V. Heinkel] I believe, and Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman] and….

ELLENDER: Fred Heinkel, that was one of the candidates from Missouri. Symington was backing Fred Heinkel. Some of his emissaries, I presume—I say emissaries, I don't really know that they were sent by him to me. I discussed the matter with him. I knew Freeman some time back when he was Mayor of Minneapolis. As a matter of fact, he appeared before our Labor Committee on two or three occasions. I thought that he was a very able young fellow at the time.

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ELLENDER: And I felt that he'd be a much better assistant to the President than Fred Heinkel. There was a third one, and I can't recall the name of this third one now. But, in any event, when I was asked, I thought, as I said, that knowing Freeman as I did and being acquainted with him, I felt that he'd be a better man than Heinkel. On the other hand, you know Heinkel appeared before our Committee on two or three occasions. He was a little contentious and all of that, but anyhow when I was asked for advice, I suggested that I thought that of those of the names presented, Freeman would be better than the others.

HACKMAN: Did you have any suggestion of your own, other than the ones that were recommended, that you would have liked to have seen become Secretary of Agriculture?

ELLENDER: No. I've always felt this way: that the man in power as president should have the complete leeway to select people of his own choosing. Since I'm in the Senate for over thirty years now, except in one or two instances I've always voted for a nominee of the president, whoever he nominated, unless he was no good. I found that only on a couple of occasions that I couldn't go along. Generally speaking, it seems to me that the President is better able to know who should compose his cabinet. And he's got to follow the advice, probably, of a lot of his supporters. I realize all of that, so in my opinion it was best to let him select the man he desired.

Now I want to say this also, that since I've been in national politics, I've always attended to my own sewing. I didn't get around and try to get the President to employ this person or that person or name this person or that person unless I was asked to make a selection or help in making a selection. I'm just not that kind of politician. But I was often asked advice as to certain people, in my state as well as in the country, how they'd fit in certain jobs, and I always responded my frank opinion. Sometimes my advice was followed, but most of the time it wasn't.

I can well remember after Mr. Freeman was selected as Secretary of Agriculture, he saw me quite often. One day he came to me with a list of people to appoint to serve under him. He showed me a list, and well I said, "Orville, I think this man would be the best one or that man next to him would be the best." He finally concluded he couldn't appoint either because he had agreed on some other that was on that list. Well, I said, "Why in the hell did you come to see me if you already had made up your mind?" I said, "You're just wasting your time here to see me." And of course from there on, I think Orville Freeman and I agreed pretty well. I mean, he knew where I stood and I know where he stands. We're very good, close friends.

I think, while we're speaking of Orville Freeman, that the late Jack Kennedy made a marvelous selection because I've been on the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry now since January of 1937. Up to now I've served longer as Chairman of that committee than any man in history, and I've had close contact with all of the members of the President's Cabinet, particularly the

Secretary of Agriculture. I don't know of any man who did the service to agriculture that Orville Freeman did. He is exceptional, and I've always been with him and for him. I think that a good selection was made, and I was glad when President Johnson retained Orville Freeman as Secretary of Agriculture because he's a well educated man, he reasons well, and he doesn't dilly-dally. He's direct and he's dependable, in my opinion.

HACKMAN: Talking about other appointments in the Department of Agriculture, what was your feeling about Charles Murphy as Under Secretary at that time?

ELLENDER: Well, Charlie's a good boy, but in my…. By the way, that was one of the cases when Freeman came to see me. I told him, I said, "I've known Charlie Murphy a long time." I said, "Charlie Murphy is a lawyer. He doesn't know a darn thing about agriculture. Why don't you get somebody who knows agriculture?" And that's when he said to me -- I'm glad you reminded me of it – that's when he said to me, "Well, this man may be all right, the one you mentioned, or this one may be all right, but we've agreed on Murphy."

HACKMAN: I heard that one of the reasons that they wanted to appoint Murphy is because they wanted a Southerner in the position of Under Secretary, and they considered Murphy as a Southerner.

ELLENDER: Well sure, from that standpoint, but from an agricultural standpoint about knowing something about agriculture, I suppose that Charlie Murphy, as I told Freeman, he could tell a carrot from a beet, but insofar as agriculture itself, he knew very little about it. I told him that I knew Charlie Murphy for a long time and that he was a good student and I had no reasons to not believe that he'd qualify himself. I had no objections to Charlie Murphy. I've worked with Charlie

Murphy way back, and he's a splendid fellow, a good man. But as I said, the fact that he was going to be Under-Secretary, to get a lawyer there, a man who didn't know too much about agriculture, I just raised a little objection to it.

HACKMAN: Do you remember what the feelings of some of the other people on the Committee were? Because I'd heard this, too, that since Freeman hadn't had a

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great deal of experience and Charlie Murphy hadn't had a great deal of experience, and then Freeman relied a great deal in the early period on Professor Willard Cochrane who some people felt didn't have a great deal of practical experience—did this bother other people too, do you think?

ELLENDER: Oh yes. Oh sure. I knew a lot of people who took shots at Cochrane. He was very unpopular before the Committee. I realize that it's very difficult to get a down to the earth farmer to be Secretary of Agriculture, but I was very much impressed with Freeman. He learned his lessons quickly, and he did his homework well. Being raised in the West among farmers and having practiced law there among farmers, it didn't take him very long to learn the ropes. Of course I learned since that a good Secretary of Agriculture above all had to be a good administrator and work with people. That's one thing that Freeman can do. He's a hard worker, and he never comes to the Committee unless he's well prepared. He's very direct. I heard him argue with members of the Senate there quite frequently supporting his view. You've got to respect a man when he does that, and not let him crawl in a hole and stay there and not say what he thinks. I've always found Freeman ready and willing to defend anything he proposed. That's one of the things that has enamoured me to him and made me feel that he's dependable and you know where he stands. Of course, I must admit that oftentimes men who work in the President's Cabinet may not advocate all of things that they are asked to advocate, but I think Freeman is so well acquainted with agriculture and he learned his lessons so well that he was a good leader and he was able to put over, even with the President and the Cabinet, his views as to many problems that confronted American agriculture. I don't believe that he was too much influenced by the views of such men as Cochrane and others. He had his own ideas, and whenever he thought the thing through and felt that this was the thing to do, he didn't hesitate to proceed in doing it.

HACKMAN: What about other appointments in the Department of Agriculture on down the line? Were you of the general opinion that they were pretty good quality? Was….

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ELLENDER: Well, that's more or less routine. A good many of them are under Civil Service, and there are very few who are not. I don't recall now, but of the 125,000 people employed in agriculture, I doubt that there are more than just a handful that are appointed by the President.

HACKMAN: I was thinking about some people like John Duncan, for instance, who had come from, I believe, North Carolina. People of this nature.

ELLENDER: Well, I never had any difficulty with them. But after people like John Duncan and others are appointed, you soon find out how they stand. It doesn't take long, particularly if they have a good supervisor like Orville Freeman. You soon find out how they think and how they work, and there have been but few disappointments.

HACKMAN: You'd talked a little bit earlier about your reaction to the appointment of Allen Dulles to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. Could you talk about that and any other appointments that you were involved in, or were particularly upset about?

ELLENDER: Well, one that I was particularly upset with was the reappointment of Allen Dulles as head of CIA. I very well recall the occasion. I was in Damascus in Syria at the time on one of my annual world tours. When I saw in the paper that the President-elect had suggested that he would appoint Allen Dulles as head of CIA, I touched the ceiling. I said to myself, "That's impossible. He must have been misinformed." So I sat down and wrote him a personal letter and told him the reasons why I thought he shouldn't even consider Allen Dulles. When I came back later, in conversation with him, I told him of some conversations I had with many people who thought as I did that Allen Dulles was not fit to serve as head of the CIA. As a matter of fact, one of them made the remark that as a detective he couldn't find a black elephant in a snowstorm. Anyhow, he had made a poor job in the view of quite a few people,

and why the President-elect should even suggest that he be appointed didn't sit right with me and quite a few other people. So, after writing this letter and later on when I returned to Washington, I was invited to the White House and I was told in confidence the reason. Later on it developed that the appointment on a temporary basis might have been in line.

If you recall, there were stories out that President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] had agreed to assist in recapturing Cuba for Cubans, and the CIA, as I recall, made an investigation of matters in Cuba and gave the President a lot of advice that there were quite a few dissidents in Cuba who didn't like Castro [Fidel Castro], and that if it were possible to land a group of soldiers, of people from America to help Cuba that they might join the forces on the island and they may recapture Cuba for the Cubans who didn't like Castro. It was also in the press -- I didn't get this directly from President Kennedy, but it was also in the press—that the President had more or less agreed to go through with whatever

agreement of whatever proposal that President Eisenhower suggested. He was, I'm sure, invited to the White House by President Eisenhower after he was President-elect, and he was given many secrets, many things that had been done by the President.

So I have no doubt but that President Kennedy saw, maybe through persuasion, eye to eye with Eisenhower on this Cuban business. But even though the late President realized that a mistake had been done, I had to take my hat off to him to carry through with what he thought. He didn't try to escape the burden. As I recall, there was no question but that there was some kind of understanding between him and President Eisenhower, and that in itself led me to believe that the reason why he finally suggested the appointment of Allen Dulles was because Allen Dulles was deeply involved in this matter of recapturing Cuba for Cubans who were against Fidel Castro. In fact, the President didn't tell me that, but I assumed it from what happened after and then from conversations I had with people who were pretty close to the Administration. I could see why the President-elect did make this appointment. But the fortunate thing was that soon after the debacle took place, out went Mr. Dulles. Of course, that convinced me then that it must have been more or less a temporary appointment so as to carry out this agreement or whatever proposal that President Eisenhower had made prior to the election.

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HACKMAN: Do you recall who some of the other people were who were upset about this appointment? Did any of them express their feelings to the President?

ELLENDER: Oh, well I can't recall; there were so many, a good many Senators. A good many felt that the President should have never been roped in, as some of them put it, by President Eisenhower and make such a mistake as he did. In my opinion, that's when CIA began to go down the drain more and more because a serious mistake was made there by the CIA in advising both President Eisenhower and Kennedy as to what the conditions were out there. They were just about the reverse of what they said they were, and it was on the assumption that the CIA knew what it was talking about that this invasion took place. It didn't turn out to be what they thought. Of course, I could give you many other instances which would probably not be pertinent here about other things that took place in Korea. President Kennedy was just a Senator then, but how CIA handled the matter there. As I've said, it's of no importance here.

HACKMAN: Were these the foundations then of your objection to Dulles, actions of this type?

ELLENDER: Yes, sir. That and quite a few other things that I knew about. I was one who felt that CIA was going entirely too far in many fields, that it had too many useless employees. I knew about the number they had and the money they spent, and I just thought it was awful for them to spend so much money. I realize that we have to have a spy system throughout the world, but the way that it was being handled under CIA director Allen Dulles didn't sit too well with me.

HACKMAN: What about other appointments that Kennedy made to key positions? Do you remember any others that you had a strong feelings on?

ELLENDER: No, I can't say that I did. I supported all of his appointees, I can tell you that. I'll repeat, I felt that President Kennedy had certain obligations to fill as President, and that since I didn't participate on a national scale in his election by making speeches around

and making promises to people who might have supported President Kennedy if I interceded in helping to get them jobs and things like that, but I never engaged in that, and so when it came to the selection of people in the Cabinet, or in fact anywhere in the government, I wasn't consulted — I'm glad of it—too much. And I didn't make any suggestions except when I was asked.

HACKMAN: While we're talking about appointments, in view of the statement that you just made, maybe I could get your reaction to some of the people who were appointed from Louisiana, and what your opinion of them was, and if there were any problems in this. I know one that came up was the appointment during the Administration of LaCour [Louis C. LaCour] as United States Attorney down there.

ELLENDER: U.S. District Attorney, yes.

HACKMAN: I had thought that there was some objection at the time on this appointment.

ELLENDER: Well, there were some objections from some of the lawyers in New Orleans, but all of that was soon dissipated. LaCour turned out to be exactly what I thought he would be, a good District Attorney, a splendid District Attorney. Of course, it was based on the fact that he married into a family which was politically inclined and all of that. I got the same reaction here lately in the appointment of a judge, and I wish to say that I've never had any difficulty in having appointed people of my choosing--that is, people I thought highly of—in the judiciary department. There was only one instance in which I disagreed with President Kennedy. But later on I told him that I wouldn't oppose the appointment even though he asked me not to. That was in the appointment of Judge Ellis [Frank B. Ellis]. If you remember, Judge Ellis was the self-appointed manager of the Kennedy campaign for President in Louisiana. He was finally elected, and of course Mr. Ellis looked for a job after the election. He tried all he knew how to get into the Cabinet. He tried, I think, from the Secretary of State on down, I'm told. I don't know that specifically, but the President, as I understood, couldn't see him qualified as a Cabinet member so he appointed him to something connected with civil defense.

HACKMAN: Right, the Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization.

ELLENDER: Mobilization, yes. Of course, Mr. Ellis was not inclined to accept that, but when he saw that he wasn't able to get anything else, why, he readily accepted. After he came to the Washington scene, he got quite busy. I don't know that the President saw eye to eye with all that he proposed, but I was informed—I don't know about this, but I just was informed—that there were quite a few little conflicts between him and the President. One day the President asked me to come talk with him, and to my surprise he suggested to me, he asked me if I'd have any opposition to the appointment of Mr. Ellis to a judgeship in New Orleans. I told him yes, that I didn't think that he was qualified, that is, I thought there were better people, more reliable people, people removed from politics, who could do a better job than Mr. Ellis. "Well," he said, "that may be. But," he said, "I'd like to appoint him. I promised that I would do it. I'd like to carry that through." Well, I said, "Mr. President, I certainly won't object to him being appointed. It's within your prerogative to appoint him, and if you send his name to the Senate, I'm not going to go testify before it in his behalf. But since you desire it, I'm not going to object to his confirmation." With that in mind, of course, he thanked me, and later on the man's name was sent in, and the appointment was made.

HACKMAN: What about some of the other Judges, Robert Ainsworth, Gordon West [Elmer G. West], and Richard Putnam? I think these were also….

ELLENDER: Splendid, splendid people. They are making a marvelous record, all of them. They were good appointments, and in those cases, of course, I named them, I mean I suggested them and I was called in to give my evaluation of them, and I was very glad to associate myself with the people you've just named. Later on, Ainsworth, as you know, was elevated to the Circuit Court of Appeals, and I recommended him for the position.

In fact, I never had any trouble at all in appointments for the judgeships and district attorneyships in Louisiana except in two instances. That was one under the late President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] when he tried to get the Attorney General from Texas, Moody [Daniel James Moody, Jr.], to be on the Circuit Court of Appeals when that appointment should

have come to Louisiana, you see, I blocked it with the help of Senator Overton [John H. Overton], and we fought, and finally the President agreed to withdraw the name of Moody, and we sent him a panel of five people and we said select your own out of these five, and he did. The other one, of course, was in respect to what I've just been talking about, Frank Ellis.

Otherwise, even with Eisenhower, I didn't…. Judge Borah [Wayne G. Borah] was

appointed, I think, before Eisenhower came to be President, but he put John Minor Wisdom on as Circuit Court of Appeals Judge, and being a Republican President, I didn't object to that.

HACKMAN: During the Kennedy Administration, did you ever feel that they went out of their way to make appointments to this group that had supported them strongly in the election in 1960 in Louisiana, the United Democrats?

ELLENDER: Not to my knowledge.

HACKMAN: No real problem of friction….

ELLENDER: Not to my knowledge. Oh, there were some appointments made, you know, minor appointments at the state level and probably at the Washington level that have escaped my memory at the moment. I don't believe that there was much done in that direction. It is possible that Mr. Gravel and others who supported President Kennedy got some of their friends on minor jobs, but those were really more or less minor jobs and those that didn't require confirmation by the Senate.

HACKMAN: Going back to farm policy which we talked about earlier, during this transition period did you have any discussions with the President as to what legislation he would probably propose? Did he have this fairly clear in his mind at that point?

ELLENDER: Oftentimes I had discussions, not so much about legislation, but policy generally. You know, I've been very fortunate. Since I've been in the Senate, it has been my privilege to visit every country in the world. Every tour that I made after he became President, why, I was called upon to go there and discuss matters with him, particularly when I made my last visit in Russia. I spent quite a lot of time with the President at different periods and discussed Russia with

him quite a bit, and I'm glad to say that we saw eye to eye on many problems facing the nation at the time in respect to Russia. The predecessors of President Kennedy felt that the best way to deal with Russia was to build this ring of steel around them and try to isolate them. No effort was made to get the people of America acquainted with the people of Russia and vice versa. I felt that instead of spending billions of dollars in building armies and in building fortifications all around the periphery of Russia, if we spent a little money in exchange programs with the Russians so that more Russians could come here and visit with us and that more Americans could go to Russia, we'd probably do a better job of it. I told him that in my own judgment it was a waste of time to discuss matters with the leadership in Russia, but that it might not be a bad idea to talk to them and get their thinking. But the best approach would be for us to get a realistic exchange program whereby a lot of Russians

would come here to visit and see what we have, and more or less make them envious of our way of life so as to instill in them that, although we admit that under Communism they might be getting more now than they did under the tsars, yet there was a possibility of them getting more if they could follow our way of life, or some of it, rather than be under Communism where they couldn't own property, where everything was government and all of that. I said, if we made that approach…. And I'm glad to say that the President was very much impressed with the views that I expressed, so much so that I took along with me the report that I made on my tour, I think it was in '61, of Russia. That was the last one.

HACKMAN: Right, the seven week tour. I think you were going that winter, and you probably met with him in January. I know you had a meeting at Palm Beach and then a couple at the White House that January.

ELLENDER: That's right. That's correct. When I handed him my report, I never saw a man able to read so fast as he did. He just went through that thing and discussed it with me just as though he had studied it and read it over. I told him I was very much impressed with that. He told me, he said, "How many reports have you made like that?"

Well, I said, "I've got seven or eight." Well, he said, "Will you send them all to me?" So what I did, I came here and I looked around and I gathered all the reports and I sent him a bound set, and he was high in his praise of them to me. I do know that he read a good many of them, particularly the ones in South America.

HACKMAN: That's the one right there probably.

ELLENDER: No, that's the second. That's the last one I made, since his death. The first one that I made, when he suggested the Alliance for Progress and all of that, why, he had my report in mind, in self-help. If you read my report that I made in 1958, which I gave him, and read the Alliance for Progress and all the laws we've passed since, they followed my report almost to the T in promoting a self-help program. That was my position from the first…. In fact, the third or fourth year after the Marshall Plan was declared, in '47 I think it was, it was in '50-51 that I started trying to get the self-help program in. When I saw I couldn't, I just fought the program. I think we were well on the way after President Kennedy became President to have a working self-help program. I was called quite a few times by him, and when I'd go talk to him, I knew that he made use of those reports that I made available to him, and he had them in his library. I don't know where they are now. I hope they'll be in the memorial library because they were given to him by me, and I think I autographed them for him. I think there were seven or eight of them. Since his death, I've made another report on South and Central America, and if the library has these others and they would like to have a bound copy of the last report I made, I'd be glad to let than have it.

HACKMAN: I'm sure they would, to go with the earlier set.

ELLENDER: Yes, if they're there.

HACKMAN: Do you remember. . . .

ELLENDER: Now, in connection with all of this I told him this. I said…. I used to call him Jack, you know; I was old enough to be his grandfather almost. I

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told him, I said, "You know, it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to talk to these leaders, particularly Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev]. I've talked to Khrushchev for over four hours one time in the Kremlin. When I first went to speak to that man, I thought that he was just an ordinary clown, clownish, and that there was nothing to him. But after speaking to him for five minutes, I soon found out that he was a diamond in the rough, and I soon found out that he's one of the few leaders in Russia that responded to the will of the people. I believe he'd be a good man for you to contact."

Later on, he did just that. He met him in Vienna, and I talked to him later, and he said that he agreed with me about the man, that he was boisterous and this and that, but that deep down he thought that Khrushchev was not as bad as Stalin [Joseph Stalin] — I mean the predecessors of Khrushchev—and that he was approachable and that he tried to respond to the will of the people. And as I pointed out in my report of 1961, I found great changes in Russia compared to what I saw in 1955 when I first went there. There was a decided change in that the people at the local level were given more authority.

When I first went there, everything was directed from Moscow. As I recall, there were sixty bureaus there handling the entire production and distribution of everything that was produced and distributed in Russia. I told him of the changes that were taking place and that what our country ought to do was to encourage that rather than discourage it. I told him of this story that in our exchange program we spent anywhere from forty-five to as much as sixty million dollars per year in order to try to get an exchange program between us and the various countries of the world. I said, to my surprise, and I named the special year, I don't remember the particular year it was, but I think it was in '61 or '62, well, when we appropriated almost fifty million dollars and only four hundred and twenty seven thousand was spent with countries behind the Iron Curtain. I said, "We're missing the boat. I believe that more of this money should be spent so that Russians could get acquainted with what we have and that Americans could get acquainted with what the Russians have and do." He agreed with me, not that he was able to change it too much, but he was going in that direction. I really and truly believe that had he lived, emphasis would have been put on a more realistic exchange with the Russian people so as to try to change them, instead of their leaders directly. In other words, my idea was that if we could inculcate in the minds of the Russian people that there was a better way of life than they were now enjoying, they could

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in turn have their leaders do that. Do you see the point? And he agreed with that, I thought.

However, there was one thing with the President that I tried to talk him out of—these large scale programs throughout the world. In other words, I thought at the time we should taper off. But he didn't think so, and he followed the advice, I presume, of those who were administering these programs—the big job holders I called them. The great difficulty in that respect was that his Secretary of State as well as the Senators as well as himself got the information from people who actually administered those programs in the world, whereas I got them by visiting. Without saying this boastfully, I think he was impressed with my views, and he was inclined to follow a good many of them. I know he did in respect to Russia as well as in respect to South and Central America. Now I discussed with him the situation in Viet Nam, and I told him at the time that I thought that what we should have done from the beginning was to have a technical aid program in South Viet Nam rather than sending trainers to train soldiers. Whereas we didn't discuss that too much, I had the idea that he might have agreed with me in that respect. But once you start the build-up in a country like that, it's pretty hard to veer away from it. What he did was, of course, to double or maybe triple what Eisenhower did— of course, Eisenhower started this, you see—instead of following my advice of having a technical aid program and teaching those people how to grow more rice. The military people got in and started the military venture there that we are now regretting.

HACKMAN: In your talks with him about Russia, from what I gather about yourself you had contacts with other people than Khrushchev. You had an acquaintanceship with a number of Russian leaders.

ELLENDER: The whole Politburo at the time.

HACKMAN: How knowledgeable was Kennedy about these other personalities? Did he know a great deal about them?

ELLENDER: No, not personally, except what he read. My contacts were personal, don't you see. I talked to Malenkov [George M. Malenkov], to all of those people out

there. In fact, Kaganovich [Lazar M. Kaganovich], one of the leaders in the Politburo at the time and Mikoyan [Anastas I. Mikoyan] and all of those people—I discussed all of that with him. And he was very much impressed, I may say. I'm sure, as I said, that he read my views on the three trips I made in Russia because I made them available to him. As I recall, I even made available to him one of the reports that I hadn't printed because in this report there was too much confidential and secret stuff that I didn't see fit to have it publicized. I do feel, I may be prejudiced when I say this, but I do feel that the late President was very much impressed with the conclusions reached by me in many of these programs. I believe that had

I been able to be closer to him and talk to him, he wouldn't have been taken over by a lot of these other people who felt differently to what I did, because that's what's happening today to my good friend, Lyndon Johnson. I think he's taken over by the military, and he listens to them more than he listens to anybody else, and he's so deeply involved now in South Viet Nam that there's no way to get out. Of course, I'd be the last man on earth to advise him to pull out because we are too deeply involved now and we've made so many promises that we can't extricate ourselves except in an honorable way.

HACKMAN: You said perhaps you might have been more influential if you'd have gotten to talk to President Kennedy more. Was there much of a problem of having access to him when you had something you wanted to discuss with him?

ELLENDER: Well, I hated to bother a busy man. Whenever I asked to talk to him, he responded. I didn't want to impose on him, but I felt that he knew my views, that he had my reports and that if he needed more information, call on me. He did call on quite a few occasions. I remember well a long time I had a talk with him. I went to visit with him and I talked to him quite a while, and then he said, "Allen, suppose you stay here in my office. I'm having the barber to come here and cut my hair. We'll talk while the barber cuts my hair." One of the barbers from Capitol Hill here, I know him by the name Dave; Dave walked in and I said, "Of course, Jack, I'll be glad to stay around." While Dave was whacking away on his hair, we kept on talking there for as long as the haircutting and even after. He was a very engaging fellow, and we kept on discussing, and he was very much interested. I do believe, and I don't say this

boastfully, but if I had been able to get to talk to him more often than I did—as I said, I didn't want to impose on him, but if I had been able to talk to him more than I did—I might have been able to do a little more in getting him sold on the idea that a good deal of this foreign aid was misdirected. Anyhow, I did talk to him quite often, and I'm proud of the fact that many things that I advocated with him and many things that I had in writing before him were actually put into practice under him, particularly the Alliance for Progress, and then the difference in attitude taken by his Administration to the prior administration in respect to Russia.

HACKMAN: We're just about to run out of tape.

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE I

HACKMAN: Alright, during the period before the Inauguration, there was a meeting, I believe which you attended— and I don't think this was the New York meeting which you referred to previously, which President-elect Kennedy, Secretary Freeman, and I think you attended the meeting—with various foreign leaders. Do you recall that?

ELLENDER: Yes.

HACKMAN: How effective was President Kennedy and Freeman at working with these people at this point?

ELLENDER: Well, of course, they listened more than they talked, you see. They were just getting information. But I want to say this: It didn't take the late President long to get a grasp of the situation, and that's what made it so impressive to me about his capability. He had broad knowledge of matters nationally—and, of course, international—and it didn't take him long to grasp the problem and get into the midst of discussion and find out what's best to do about it. I was particularly impressed with his change of attitude on farming because he then became a thinker, not around Massachusetts and all that, regional, but nationally and worldwide. After he was able to discuss the problems confronting our nation in agriculture, I think that he realized that the basis of prosperity in our nation was the proper conservation of our water and land resources, and that any country

that was deficient in land in order to produce sufficient food and fiber to support the population was in a bad way. Of course, I tuned in quite often to tell him of my experiences abroad. For instance, I remember discussing with him on one occasion how Persia at one time was able to support the livelihood of a hundred million people—at that time, Persia consisted of Iraq and Iran; it was a great area—but that by neglecting to harness the great Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that great country simply went to the dogs, as it were, agriculturally. It was such conversation as that, I believe, that made him realize the importance of protecting and preserving these natural resources, and I'm proud to say that in conserving those resources by way of public works — I served as Chairman of the Public Works Subcommittee — I never had any trouble in getting him to back all appropriations necessary in order for us to protect and preserve these great resources for future generations. Particularly was that true in the West—in fact, all over the country.

I think he was very much interested in navigation and all of that. The theme of it all was, finally, to take our great water resources and make them work for us. Take the waters in the rivers—you can use it for navigation, you can use it to develop water power, you can use it to reclaim land, to irrigate, and he grasped that quickly. He saw the picture.

I gathered from my talks with President Kennedy that he devoted a good deal of his reading to history, and I don't think he particularized very much in matters of agriculture and conservation—I gathered that. But he soon saw the point of protecting and preserving these great resources for future generations, and he realized, as I did, that nations go by the wayside because of their inability to produce sufficient food and fiber to feed and clothe the people living in these countries.

It didn't take me long, or it didn't take Freeman long, and others, to convince him that the thing to do was to do that very thing. And that is to work with the farmer, and in order to be able to work with the farmers, to not only protect him from price decreases but in

providing methods so that he could protect and preserve the land that he owned, not only for himself but for generations yet unborn. Maybe I'm getting too dramatic.

HACKMAN: No. No, not at all. Moving into the beginning of the Administration on agriculture, about the first thing that came up was that emergency feed grains legislation in '61.

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ELLENDER: '61.

HACKMAN: How was it possible to get that through so fast?

ELLENDER: Well, because it was an emergency. We had at hand millions of tons of, let's say, corn and other feed grains. As I recall, we had eighty-three million tons, and all we needed was about thirty-six. We had to do something about this surplus. Take in the case of wheat, we had, as I recall, over a billion and a half bushels in excess of our requirements. As a matter of fact, at that time, even though we didn't plant a grain of wheat, we had enough to last us for a year without planting. We had programs at hand whereby we couldn't curtail the production of, let's say, wheat, because there was a provision in the law that read that the Secretary of Agriculture was unable to cut back on production where the amount of acres of wheat were less than fifty-five million acres. And here we were…. At the time that this restriction was put into the law, as we explained to him, the production of wheat was about eleven bushels per acre, and now it's twenty-six bushels, don't you see. He was eager to learn about that and quick to grasp the problem. He got behind this, and we had no trouble to put it through because the program was becoming more costly than ever, and it was easy to show him that it was cheaper for us to pay not to produce the commodity than to produce it and then have to store it. And he grasped that quickly. We were able to put the program through without too much contention. There was only one program in which we differed, and that was in respect to cotton. I don't know what promises he made to the cotton mills of the northeast, in fact the whole country, but that was one program in which we differed to some extent. It just happened that I argued against it, but I lost. But it turns out now that I was right, and I'm proud of it. In any event, I want to repeat that the President was very easy to approach on that subject, and once he grasped the problem, it didn't take him long to make up his mind. I'm only sorry that we didn't get together more and talk more about these problems because I believe that he was a man that was very easily approached, and it's possible that, like many presidents, he wouldn't have been taken over by some of these wishful thinkers and some people who didn't study the problem through but were more or less selfish in the matter, you see.

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HACKMAN: Moving on to the Omnibus Bill of '61, more permanent type legislation. Title I of that was what was called the "Cochrane" part of the bill, I believe, where they had that new procedural approach: the Secretary of Agriculture together with the farmer committees were going to write the program. Do you remember what your feelings were about this?

ELLENDER: Well, the thing that I can well remember is that we had to work out some program to keep the farmer afloat so he could make a living, and at the same time reduce surpluses because the cost of—well, it was getting to be scandalous. Many warehousemen built warehouses throughout the nation, and they were making big profits, and that element was, of course, against curtailment of production. They wanted surpluses because they were able to rent their warehouses at a lucrative sum. But I think the President saw through that quite well, and he went along with the program that meant production in keeping with our existing requirements and then gradually reducing the amount of surplus we had at hand. Of course, we had PL-480 which was the Surplus Disposal Program that was already in effect since 1956, and that was one avenue we used in order to rid ourselves of the excess wheat we had on hand, and corn, and other products—and cotton. And he went along with all of that. But the primary objective of the 1961 act was to put agriculture back on the tracks so that we could reach a point whereby production would be more or less in keeping with our requirements, both for domestic consumption as well as foreign sales. We were approaching that program, and that program is now working pretty well.

The only criticism I have is that it's a little costly, much more costly than I thought. Of course, the reason for that is that our farmers, because of the soil conservation program, because of the new uses we've found of land--of insecticides and new ways of conserving the soil and weeding the soil and making it more productive—that farmers were able to produce more and more food on less land. Take for instance when I first came to Washington back in 1937. As I recall, 23 per cent of our population was engaged in farming. They produced food for themselves and about twelve to fifteen more people. Through mechanization, through the use of good pesticides, and conservation of our soil

and better reclamation methods and so forth….Take in the case of cotton, we are producing today as much cotton on sixteen million acres of land as we produced, say twenty years ago, on forty-two million acres, you see. And the same thing holds true for corn. Take in the case of corn, only twenty-five years ago the average production on the farm was thirty-three bushels; today, it's seventy-two. I attribute all of that to these programs that we've had in effect. We've made our farmers really and truly productive farmers. Of course, all of this has been attained by good climate in assisting them and, of course, by paying the farmers not to plant on the assumption that it was cheaper not to produce because of the cost of storage and things like that. I think the program is on the way to success, provided, of course, we can get the farmers to get this program to be less costly.

HACKMAN: What do you think the reasons, if you can remember, were for the failure of Title I of that Cochrane bill to get out of the Senate Committee in 1961? I've heard that some people were worried about giving too much power to the Secretary of Agriculture at that point.

ELLENDER: Well, that was one of the reasons. But to be frank and candid with you, after hearing all of the testimony, the Committee itself rewrote the bill, rewrote the 1961 act. And I'm proud to say that I took the lead in that. I told the President as well as the Secretary of Agriculture that certain parts of that program could not be enacted by Congress. Of course, you know I had served on that Committee at that time for over twenty-five years. From 1937 through 1961 I'd been a member of that Committee, and I had my fingers in all of the legislation that had been enacted by the Congress, and I had my own views. I'm glad to say that in many cases in the discussion with Mr. Freeman and with the President and then with various farm leaders, we came to the conclusions reached in '61. Of course, all of these programs, as you may recall, were temporary, and the idea was to get rid of these surpluses. That was the main reason, so that after we got to the point where we rid ourselves of these surpluses, then we could get the farmers to produce what the market demanded, you see. That gave rise to the act of '65; that was the basis for it. And that's when I pressed my own views and got the Congress to enact all of it except in respect to cotton.

You see what the Administration did following the death of President Kennedy, we tried to carry this through, but it was

rather difficult to make certain changes, particularly in reducing the large acreage that was devoted to wheat where the farmers couldn't be disturbed under fifty-five million acres. That's why I contended that we had such a huge surplus of wheat on hand, and if it hadn't been for the fact that we had an outlet for it by way of gifts to people abroad, we wouldn't know what to do with it. In any event, I'm proud to say that the President was very eager to learn in farming because, to say the least, that was one subject in which I said he was a little ignorant about. And I was proud of the fact that I was able, not only directly but indirectly, to influence him to follow through with some of these programs.

HACKMAN: What about 1962? That was a very complicated series of events when you had to take the thing out of Committee and get a couple of amendments on the floor for the permanent controls, I believe. Then it went to the House, and the House let it die, and you had to pass it again in the Senate. What do you remember about the main problems you faced legislatively in getting that done?

ELLENDER: Well, the problems there, of course, affected many farmers. One of them was to find some ways and means of reducing our surpluses. You see, the corn people, those who grew corn, those who grew various grain crops, never wished to be under control, but they wanted protection, and that's where our differences occurred. The House was adamant, for instance, in not putting the

corn growers under restriction. They said the corn growers have never been given allotments, and when they did, it never worked. Well, that was the thorn in our side, as it were, why the Senate thought one way and the House another. But all of this was ironed out. The genesis of it, of course, was in '61 and '62. It was when these programs were sought to be renewed, and we found them to be very costly.

You know that the thought was that if we reduced production, we'd save a lot on storage. But what happened was that, although we reduced the acreage, we didn't reduce the production. You know, the farmers are the smartest people on earth. You give them a program, and they'll use their sharp pencil and find out how much they can get out of it, how much they can grow out of it. Take in the case of cotton people and the corn people, my God, they were able to produce three times more on one acre than they

did twenty years ago. Of course, when you came to cut back on acreage, that's when they sharpened that pencil and, actually, in most cases produced more on less acreage than they did on a lot of acreage. That was our problem.

Here we reduced the acreage, we paid them to reduce, but the production was the same. And it was pretty difficult to put some of those programs through. When we finally began to see daylight—that is by reducing acreage and then selling abroad, giving away abroad for many programs—it was then that we struck on the act of 1965 which is now the law. The thought at the time was that if the '65 act was properly administered, at the end of four years, farmers could depend at the market place for their prices rather than on price supports as was the case before. That was our idea. I'm not going to prognosticate what's going to happen, but if things keep on as they are now going, my fear is that our farmers are producing so much on less acreage that it may be a blessing in disguise, but at the same time it's very costly to our government.

HACKMAN: How effective were Secretary Freeman and then Ken Birkhead [Kenneth M. Birkhead] had that legislative liaison office over there—how effective were they in relations with Congress in helping to get these things passed?

ELLENDER: Very good.

HACKMAN: Very good?

ELLENDER: Very effective. But, of course, they got their cues from some of us. For instance, I had Freeman sitting where you're now sitting. Oftentimes when he'd come here and say, "This is our program." I said, "You'll never put it through." Well, we tried. The House would agree with him. The House would pass the bill, but when it came to the Senate, when it came to me, I just changed it. We got agreement in most cases, but it was a far cry from what the programs were as they were first submitted to the Congress.

HACKMAN: Could you compare the attitude of Secretary Freeman and the approach he used on bills when he brought them to you and developed them with the Senate Committee—let's say, compare that to what Secretary Benson's [Ezra Taft Benson] policy was.

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ELLENDER: Oh, well, there's no comparison. Benson never consulted anybody. He had a mind of his own, and I guess his head was as hard as granite. He followed the more conservative idea that the farmer could stand on his own feet. He dealt more with the Farm Bureau. Now you see, the American Farm Bureau is the largest farmer organization in the country, and the approach they had was to take x number of acres of land out of cultivation, maybe eighty million or a hundred million acres, pay the farmers not to plant on that eighty million acres, and then let them plant whatever they desired on the rest of it. Well, my position was that, sooner or later, if you stopped paying them not to plant, one day the taxpayers would get tired of paying these huge amounts and the program would fall by the wayside. I contended that way. Of course I was never able to convince Mr. Benson of that. But Mr. Benson was never willing to slap a program on the corn growers, the same as was put on cotton growers or on wheat growers where the farmers engaged in the production of those two crops, cotton and wheat, why, they were willing to curtail their acres in order to get better support prices. But in the case of corn, they wanted support prices but no curtailment of acres, except if they were paid a handsome price and that they'd make the same price by not planting as they did by planting, don't you see. They were the hardest people to deal with, and the nucleus of the American Farm Bureau was in the corn growers. That's why they started the organization. One of their presidents, I don't remember his name now, but he was a great pal of Benson, and he and Benson saw eye to eye. And of course Benson was never for any of these programs wherein you had price supports of any consequence. He veered away from that.

HACKMAN: Was that Schuman [Charles B. Schuman] or was that before him?

ELLENDER: No, it was before Schuman. Schuman was of the same idea almost.

HACKMAN: What about the White House's efforts on behalf of legislation, O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien] office? Were they generally effective or what type of mistakes did they make?

ELLENDER: Well, they didn't make any mistakes. More or less, I would classify them as lobbyists for the Administration. They would come in and ask us to support

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certain legislation. But this was general, it was not farming. My good friend Freeman did most of the talk, on that. But you know, Freeman and I became good friends because so

many times we discussed matters here and I'd tell him what I thought could be done. When I would show him and when I would argue with him and when the legislation was finally passed and he saw that I was right, he more or less came here and discussed the matters before he even put the bills before the Congress.

HACKMAN: Would this have been after 1961?

ELLENDER: Yes, that was after '61. Sure. And particularly was it true in the act of '65. I would not introduce the act of '65 that he presented to the Senate. Nobody did. He put the bill before the House, and the House Committee grabbed it lock, stock, and barrel, but when it came out of the conference, you wouldn't recognize it as the House bill. They really followed the Senate, don't you see. It was just a matter of approach, but all in all, fundamentally, there wasn't much difference except as to cost. It was my belief that if the farmer expected the government to assist him in protecting his price structure, that he should be willing to cooperate. He shouldn't want to plant all he could grow and then ask the government to support him. That was my philosophy.

HACKMAN: What about the wheat referendum of 1963? What do you think the causes of its failure were?

ELLENDER: Well, because the farmers didn't get what they thought they should, and that was the year….The year before that, you see, we finally got out the provision requiring the fifty-five million minimum acres. When we got that out, it made a lot of the farmers mad, and they fought the wheat program because they didn't see that they could make anything out of it. That's where the Farm Bureau came in and got all the small farmers. You see, the mistake we made was to put all of the small farmers in the vote on the proposal, and of course Schuman and his crowd got together and defeated it. After the defeat, then we came in on a more or less voluntary program. The voluntary program worked fairly well, I may say.

HACKMAN: Do you remember talking about the referendum with President Kennedy? I think you'd been at the White House the day before to sign a feed grains bill, and

then I believe you talked with him again soon after that.

ELLENDER: Well, I talked to him about the wheat program in particular, about this fifty-five million acres, and I know that he was instrumental in helping to knock that out. I'd been trying for six or seven years, and I told him that was the source of all of our trouble in so far as wheat was concerned, and he agreed with me. We finally succeeded in getting it out and in getting the 1965 act. That is, all of this, as I said, formed the basis of the 1965 act.

HACKMAN: Here, let's see, we haven't talked about the sale of wheat to Russia. There was some discussion in the Administration at that time as to whether Congress should be asked to okay that. Were you involved in this and what was your position?

ELLENDER: My position was that we should sell wheat to Russia.

HACKMAN: What about asking Congress for permission? Did you advise the White House?

ELLENDER: No, sir. I thought this: that we shouldn't allow the countries of western Europe to act as brokers for us. Here we sold wheat to all of the countries of western Europe. They took our wheat, converted it to flour, and then sold it to the countries behind the iron Curtain. It was alright for them to make enormous profits in sales on our products, but they objected, particularly Germany of all countries, old man Adenauerl [Konrad Adenauerl] …. Here he was, his country's people were making a lot of profits in selling to Russia and to East Germany, and they had built up a trade, as I remember, aggregating two and one half to three billion dollars. Of course, if we sold wheat and other things as they did, why, it would cut them out of this trade or lessen it. I'm sure that the late President saw the light, and he advocated the sale of wheat to Russia. But, as I recall, there was something he provided; it wasn't to be a commercial sale; he balked at that, as I recall. The idea that I had and others was to sell to Russia the same as we sold to anybody else in the hope that through trade we could get closer to the people. Of course, one of the things that the Russian people knew was that their production capacity had failed through Communism, and they knew that we were

the ones making all of this available to them, and that would have a very healthy effect on getting them to work with us, you see. President Kennedy thought the same way.

HACKMAN: Okay, maybe we can talk a little bit about civil rights during the Administration. What actions did you anticipate out of the Administration, let's say, when Kennedy was first elected? Did you discuss through the winter at all what they might do in civil rights?

ELLENDER: Well, I don't know the year that this happened. It may have been the year before he died or maybe the year he died. It was my belief that deep down President Kennedy was not desirous of involving his Administration in any more civil rights bills, that Johnson had enacted one that should work. I have no doubt in my own mind but that he was persuaded to put in another bill by his brother. That's my belief. Now I didn't talk to Bobby about that, but from all I heard, as Attorney General…. I think it was politically motivated by Bobby, and I may be wrong about that. I hope he'll forgive me if my judgment is wrong, but it is my belief that Kennedy was

trying to be slow about this and keep out of any more civil rights programs, but that if we could take the laws on the statute books and have them administered, that we might be able to get along. Bobby, as Attorney General, I believe—and I get that from what I heard at the time and what most Southerners heard and by talks that others had with the Administration—that Bobby was instrumental in promoting what became, as I recall, the '64 act.

HACKMAN: Right. It was proposed in '63 and became the '64 act.

ELLENDER: Right, the '64 act. That's right. It's my sincere belief that Kennedy wasn't too strong for that bill.

HACKMAN: Did he ever express to you any frustrations he felt with civil rights leaders?

ELLENDER: Oh, my God, quite a few times, quite a few times. His idea was along this line: it's necessary to enforce the law on the statute books, let's use those
laws and not go so far and try to get them to work together. In

other words, I believe this: that he felt, and I felt the same way, that if we could work out some plans whereby the Negro could be helped economically, that is, give him work and give him the means whereby he could be able to do work by training…. His idea was that if a Negro or a white, in fact any member of society, was capable of doing a certain job, he shouldn't be discriminated against. As far as I'm concerned, that's my view. In other words, it matters not, particularly in our factories, in the work in and about cities and things like that, that irrespective of the color of a man's skin, if he's capable, he ought to be given the job and not discriminated against. It's my belief that if that attitude had been cultivated by him…. And I believe that that was what he was after. I may be in error about it now because he never told me this, but judging from the conversations I had with people close to him, it's my belief that his idea was to give them better education, train them better so that they would become better members of society in that they would be capable of doing more than they could.

HACKMAN: Who do you mean particularly when you talk about people close to him that you were talking with?

ELLENDER: Well, I was talking about people in the Administration; Larry O'Brien talked, I don't remember any particular conversation. It's my belief that a lot of people in the Administration felt that the better approach to this, instead of putting more laws on the statute books, was to enforce those you had and try to educate the Negro and try to make him a better servant to society by giving him on the job training or something like that where he could earn more and be in a position where he could feed his family, where he wouldn't be wanting for anything. Of course, I believe that

where President Kennedy got his idea was a lot of people came to Massachusetts, a lot of them came to New York from the farms in the South where there was no education, and I believe he realized that the problem was to put those people in a position where they could be good workers for society, and the way to do that was through on the job training, through these—what kind of schools?

HACKMAN: Vocational schools?

ELLENDER: Vocational schools and things of that kind and make it so that they could become better members of

society by putting themselves in the position where they could hold good jobs. I think that will solve the problem. I thought then, and I still think, that that's what it's going to come to because you can't force people to do things they don't want to do.

HACKMAN: One of the first things that came up was the New Orleans school integration issue in '61. Do you remember what your involvement in this was, what your conversations would have been, either with Bobby or the President at that time?

ELLENDER: Well, my idea at the time was not to force the issue, but that it would gradually work itself out; that if you tried to force people to do something they didn't want to do, you'd be far from succeeding; but that if you could work at it gradually, it would take root. In other words, you've got in our nation today a lot of people who don't know the problem too well. You take the people of the North for instance. They never fooled me. I knew that you had as much segregation up North as you have in the South. The only difference between us was that we did ours openly. Everybody knew where we stood, but in Massachusetts, as well as in Illinois and Indiana, you had the same kind of segregation. Today the North is learning the evils of quick integration. That's why you're having so much trouble there, in my opinion. If this thing had been done on a gradual scale, taking it by small chunks instead of the whole hog, it's my belief that we would have gradually worked that way. It's my sincere belief that had Kennedy lived and remained President and been re-elected, I don't believe that the urge to go at it as strongly as the present advocates are going, I don't think that that would have happened. I think that he would have found some way to finesse in some way and convince them that the best way to do it would be gradually rather than putting laws on the statute books that looks for change overnight instead of in a year or two years or three years. I still believe, and let me say this to you, that after the act of '65—what was the last act, '65?

HACKMAN: '65.

ELLENDER: '65. I was the first Southerner to issue a strong statement to my people, in fact, to the nation, to this effect: "We from the South have fought this

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all we knew how; we've lost. Now unless the Supreme Court holds this act unconstitutional, let's try to live under it, let's obey it." I got a few sassy letters from some people. Generally speaking, it was well received, and I'm glad to say that the other Southerners followed through, Senator Russell [Richard B. Russell, Jr.] from Georgia, Senator Talmadge [Herman Eugene Talmadge], and others, and it had some good effect. I got a lot of letters from many of the Negro leaders. I really believe this, that we have a lot of good Negro leaders who would follow through with this, that is, to do this gradually rather than overnight. I believe that many of them are beginning to realize it, don't you see. But you couldn't convince a fellow like Dr. Martin Luther King, or this fellow, what's his name?

HACKMAN: Carmichael [Stokely Carmichael]?

ELLENDER: Carmichael and Negroes of this brand, you couldn't make them believe anything like that. You're going to see that in the long run, this thing is going to work itself out. I don't believe you'll force it, you'll have more trouble. The tragedy of all of this is, as I discussed with many of the leaders of the Administration, that those you're trying to help are those who are going to be the biggest sufferers. Take what happened here recently in Detroit or in New Jersey. Ninety-six per cent of those who were killed were Negroes. Ninety per cent of those who were put out of homes were Negroes and poor whites. You know, something that the Negroes or these leaders fail to realize, that of the poor, two thirds of them are white, two thirds of them. It strikes me that they ought to realize that you can't get the government to do everything for you unless you show responsibility. In order to get things done, you've got to assume responsibility. As I've often said on this, we're having trouble now with the enormous number of children that we have on relief due to children born out of wedlock. All of these things are creeping up on us more quickly than we expect, and it's going to mean more problems for the future, and it strikes me that we'll have a great deal more difficulty to settle these problems than if we had started out a long time ago by doing this gradually. The first thing that I would have done was to try and help the Negro economically and give him equal opportunity if he was capable. That's what he was after, but a lot of people lost sight of that, you see. They start about intermarriage or about this and that. It's my belief …

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ELLENDER: And I'm not quoting Kennedy, don't misunderstand me; I'm not quoting what he said or what he would have done. But I really believe that in his judgment it might have been much better to take this by

steps rather than try to do what Johnson did after Kennedy's death.

HACKMAN: During the Kennedy period, if something came up like a suit involving something in Louisiana, would they consult with you on this?

ELLENDER: No, sir. Not at all.

HACKMAN: Did they work through other members of the Congressional delegation?

ELLENDER: No. No. In fact, I was never consulted, some others may have been, but I was never consulted. On two or three occasions since the assassination, I did call in the Attorney General and told him that he was going too far on certain matters, for instance, like this HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] business about the rules and regulations that are drafted, in my opinion, to go far beyond the purview of the law. Before that time I was never consulted. All I did was to simply stand on the sidelines and watch what would happen. I wasn't surprised at all in what happened. Of course, if you read my speeches and my statements, you'll see that I think many of us were right in our advocacy, that it would have been far better for us to train the Negro and give him more attention so that he could make his way in society through getting more work and climbing with others, that because of better jobs, he was in a better situation to take care of his family. No matter what the color of your skin is, your feeling towards your children is the same. I often felt, my God, that there was a lot of advantage taken of Negroes. You know, I lived among the Negroes, and my father was one of the kindest men that ever lived. He was kind to Negroes; I saw him get up at night, at two o'clock in the morning, to go and minister to Negroes who were sick and bring them medicine and so forth. When my father died, there were more Negroes at his funeral than white people because he was kind to them. I think that was the approach that I talked about

and preached, but I somehow was never listened to. It's not that I was against the Negro at all, but I was for the laws that we had on the statute books, for our Constitution and things like that. I think in the long run those who were the strongest advocates of this…. I go back to what I said a while ago about President Kennedy; if he had lived, I don't believe, number one, that he would have been able to get the '64 act through Congress as Johnson did.

HACKMAN: Going to something else, do you remember he took a trip to New Orleans in May of 1962? I think you and some members went down with him on the plane.

ELLENDER: I was on the plane.

HACKMAN: Do you remember, number one, did he ask you for your advice at that time as to whether he should make that trip, because some people wondered if he should go to New Orleans at the time?

ELLENDER: No. No. All I know is that I was invited to go, and I believe this: I believe that Hale Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs], who is the Congressman of the district in New Orleans, where it takes in a good deal of New Orleans, I think he was instrumental in getting Jack to go there. That's my belief.

HACKMAN: Do you remember anything about the discussion on the way down, or the trip? Anything in particular?

ELLENDER: No, but he was very happy to go and he made a splendid speech and he was well received by everybody. He was so human. He was a man of the people and he was warmhearted, and somehow he had "it" insofar as the ladies were concerned. They loved him, you know, because of his mannerism and his action. He was well liked.

HACKMAN: Moving on to some general considerations of Kennedy's effectiveness as a President with the Senate, what do you think were the chief errors or handicaps that he had in his approach to the Senate? You've talked about this some previously, his not being aggressive enough. What about, for instance, the people around him as his advisors in this period?

ELLENDER: Well, President Kennedy was surrounded, as all presidents are, by a lot of dreamers, by a lot of people who are not practical. And as I've often said, no matter who is elected president….Let's take in your State Department. You have, I think twenty-seven to thirty thousand people employed there and abroad. The president has, under the law he can appoint probably twenty-five or thirty key people; the rest remained there, and they're the policy makers, don't you see. They are the ones who it percolates from. When a new secretary comes in, he consults with the older people there, and the oldsters who've been there for a long time will bring on the same kind of policy that was before, as a rule. That's when I told, as I recall very vividly, talking to him about foreign aid, about my trips abroad—that you have people there who're advising you who've been there since the year 1. They've been for these programs all these times, they've established themselves in these programs, they've got friends abroad, and where you get your information is from the administrators of those programs. I said, "No matter if you're a new President, you're not going to change that. You're going to follow, as all your past predecessors did, set programs that have been in effect for a long time." That has changed very little since I've been here, since 1937.

HACKMAN: Do you think many people were upset by the number of young people he had around him?

ELLENDER: No. No, I don't think so. It might have been good to have new blood in there. Now, of course, I don't mean to say that for the Senate because I've been around quite a while, and although I'm old in years, I think I'm still young in ideas. I think we do need some older people who are more level headed than some of these youngsters, but a mixture of them won't hurt because the older ones can be given ideas and then it gives them food for thought. It might help them to think things through, and maybe they'll come up with something different from what they would have if they had been left to themselves.

HACKMAN: It's often said that maybe the Kennedy Administration sent up too much new legislation; they worked Congress too hard. Do you think this was a problem, too many new ideas?

[-46-]

ELLENDER: Well, I was kind of bothered about it. I was one who felt that way. You know, I'm one who believes as Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson] did that the best governed are the least governed. I'm one that does not believe in a centralized government. Sooner or later, we're going to regret it. Those who've been advocating this for a long time will me the day that they did that. In other words, we are veering away from local self government fast, and the way that that's being done is through these programs. You start the federal government in the business of letting local schools have money to run their schools, the first thing you know there will be efforts made to dictate. The same thing holds true in all the endeavors in which the government puts in money. You take in your municipalities today, my God, take all the mayors that are trying to tell the President what to do now about these programs to revitalize the cities. Once they get a little taste of government power, of government assistance, why, it's pretty hard for them to get away from it. From that standpoint, I think we've made serious mistakes, and that includes Kennedy and it includes Johnson, in particular, and also President Eisenhower and Roosevelt. In fact, Roosevelt started it. This shifting from local government to centralized government is, in my opinion, unless it is checked, going to mean our downfall.

HACKMAN: Just a little bit more. It is sometimes said that the Kennedy Administration may have been able to use Vice President Johnson more effectively in Congressional relations. Did you feel that was so since he was Vice President?

ELLENDER: No, I think this: that Johnson was very effective on his own when he was Majority Leader, you see. He was able to put things across. I want to say this about Johnson, that when he discussed matters with the President [Eisenhower], I'm sure the President didn't get all that he asked for. It was thoroughly thrashed out at the presidential level, at the Administration level. But after

Johnson promised to do something for an administration, why, he went all out for it, and he was very effective in that regard. Of course, after he became Vice President, I really believe that he kind of lost out his influence at the congressional level, may I say. He was able to talk to a few, but it wasn't the same by any means. You had

[-47-]

different leadership. And Johnson was very capable when he himself took over and when he himself was able to call the shots and go forward just like he became after he became President. He was very effective as President because of his knowledge of legislation and how to put it through and then his closeness to the members of Congress that he worked with in prior years, and he was a good salesman in selling ideas to many people at the congressional level. He was very effective, and is still very effective, to sell his ideas to his congressional leaders in the Congress.

HACKMAN: What did you think of the Senate leadership that replaced Johnson when he became Vice President? Did this handicap the Kennedy Administration in getting the legislation they wanted?

ELLENDER: Well, you didn't have that kind of leadership, let's say, that Kennedy got with Johnson in the chair. As I've said, Kennedy was not as aggressive as he could have been, and personally I may be in error about this, but personally it's my belief that if Kennedy had lived, the program that Johnson afterwards put through would have never been enacted as it was enacted. The country found itself in mourning over a great man, and this wave of emotionalism that took over was what assisted Johnson in being able, as President, to put this program through without any question.

HACKMAN: Those are about all the specific questions I have. If you can think of anything that you can remember that we left out or any conclusions you want to draw, feel free to do so.

ELLENDER: Well, I don't know of anything that I can add. There may be a lot of things I'll think about after you leave me because I had a lot of rich experience with the presidents from Roosevelt on up, and also with members of Congress who afterwards became president or were in high office. Of all the presidents, I found none that was more honorable in every respect than Jack Kennedy. I mean, you could depend on him. He was a little shy; he wasn't forward. I don't think that he ever tried to use his office to pursue his influence in any field, but I don't believe that he followed…. He did a lot

[-48-]

of his own thinking. I'm sure that he took some advice from quite a few of his followers in fields where he wasn't too well acquainted. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

Generally speaking, I think the President carried on the duties of his office as he saw fit. Now he was persuaded somewhat by good politics. I can say, and I'm sure it's natural, that no doubt he was looking to being re-elected, and he wouldn't be offensive to groups that he expected support from. It's just natural. I don't hold that against him. If he had lived, as I said, I doubt that the civil rights bills that were finally enacted would have been put on the statute books as written. That, to my way of thinking, is causing us a lot of trouble in our country today. I believe that the President would have been prone to let the localities do more of their own chores than to let the federal government go in their midst and try to stir up things.

HACKMAN: How do you think he'd have done in Louisiana in 1964 if he'd have still been around?

ELLENDER: Well, I think he would have had a hard time because of his advocacy of….

HACKMAN: The legislation?

ELLENDER: That's right.

HACKMAN: Up until the time he proposed the legislation, the problem was not that great. Right?

ELLENDER: Absolutely no doubt of it. If that act had not been put in and he would have kept on advocating laws to help the people as a whole, I think they would have gone along with him. But many people felt, as I did, that he would try to enforce the laws that were then on the statute books. In fact, that, I believe, was his attitude; that's what he desired to do up until he was sold the bill of goods that if you don't do this, if you don't enact ether laws dealing with civil rights, that you're likely to lose the election in 1964. Now I'm not criticizing for that, but he had become more involved in politics. He had become more of a politician, and he realized that unless he followed the advice of politicians throughout the country, although they may have been misguided, that he might have had a hard time to be re-elected to the presidency. It's my belief that he would have gained ground in Louisiana had he

not followed the advice of Bobby and others to try to go forward in putting more and more of these laws on the statute books that meant a centralization of government in Washington, away from the states and the local subdivisions here to Washington. That's what's happening now. You see, the people are very resentful of that throughout the nation today, I believe. It's true they're getting quite a bit from Washington, but they're paying dearly for it. As time goes on you'll see that the people will tend to be more and more conservative, particularly when they begin to see with their own eyes that a lot of people are getting much out of government without sharing responsibility. That's what's happening today in our country,

and that is, in my opinion, the cause of much of our trouble.

HACKMAN: Okay.

ELLENDER: Well, thank you very much.

HACKMAN: Thank you. I enjoyed it very much.

Allen J. Ellender Oral History Transcript – JFK #1
Name List

T

W

General Services Administration
John F. Kennedy Library
National Archives and Records Service
380 Trapelo Road,
Waltham, Ma 02154

15 November 1979

The following material was received from the Nicholls State University Library in Thibodaux, Louisiana, depository for the Allen J. Ellender papers. For ease of reference it is hereby attached as an appendix to the John F. Kennedy Library's oral history interview with Senator Ellender.

William W. Moss
Chief Archivist

Ellender Hands Kennedy Plate of Jambalaya

—UPI Telephoto.

OYSTER JAMBALAYA, a famous Louisiana Creole dish personally prepared by Sen. Allen J. Ellender from his own special recipe, is the dish that Ellender is handing to Sen. John F. Kennedy at the second of a series of three "family" luncheons given by Democratic national chairman Henry Jackson (left) at the nation's capital. Left of the Democratic presidential candidate is Sen. George Smathers of Florida. It also was a meeting of Democrats to discuss the coming campaign.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 24, 1963

file

Allen:

Dear ~~Senator~~:

Please accept my warmest congratulations on your birthday. I hope that this will be a happy and memorable occasion and that the years to come will bring you continued health and happiness.

Sincerely,

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

U.S. Code. Those provisions authorize the President, when faced with such unlawful obstructions against the authority of the United States as existed in Alabama, to "call into Federal service such of the militia of any State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary" (10 U.S.C. § 332) and to use "the militia or the armed forces, or both, or . . . other means" (10 U.S.C. § 333). The militia of the United States includes the national guard, meaning the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard of the several states. 10 U.S.C. § 311 and § 101 (9), (10), (12).

In furtherance of the President's order the Secretary of Defense immediately called into active military service all of the units and members of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard of the State of Alabama to serve in the active military service of the United States for an indefinite period and until relieved by appropriate orders. This call was transmitted by the Secretary of the Army, acting by direction of, and under delegation of authority from, the Secretary of Defense. Copies of the Department of the Army message (No. D.A. 340638, June 11, 1963) were furnished immediately to the Governor of Alabama and to the commanding officers of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard of the State of Alabama.

It is apparent that the Alabama National Guard was properly called into federal service pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §§ 332-4, and in accordance with the procedure provided in those sections. Since the call to federal service did not invoke the authority of 10 U.S.C. § 3500, referred to by Mr. Bowen, the procedure prescribed by that section was not used.

I trust that the foregoing information will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Attorney General

Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C.

AUG 20 1963

OFFICE OF
RECEIVED
AUG 21 1963
ALLEN J. ELLENDER

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator Ellender:

This is in response to your letter of July 22, 1963, enclosing a letter from Mr. Kenneth F. Bowen of LaFayette, Louisiana. Mr. Bowen inquired as to the legal authority under which the President acted recently to call the Alabama National Guard into federal service. In particular, he inquired why the call to federal service was not issued through the Governor of Alabama as provided in 10 U.S.C. § 3500. This was not done because the national guard units were called into federal service upon the basis of other statutory authority.

The cause for the call and use of the national guard in Alabama was the obstruction of United States court orders for the entry of qualified students into the University of Alabama. On June 11, 1963, the President issued a proclamation (No. 3542, 28 Fed. Reg. 5707) commanding the Governor of Alabama and all other persons engaged in the unlawful obstruction to cease and desist therefrom. When it appeared that the commands of that order had not been obeyed and the obstruction of justice was continuing, the President, on the same day, issued Executive Order 11111 (28 Fed. Reg. 5709) authorizing and directing the Secretary of Defense to take all appropriate steps to remove obstructions of justice in the State of Alabama. For this purpose he was authorized and directed inter alia, to call into the active military service of the United States, and use, any or all of the units of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard of the State of Alabama. Both the proclamation and the executive order were issued under, and expressly invoked, the authority of sections 332, 333, and 334 of Title 10

JOHN F. KENNEDY
MASSACHUSETTS

REC'D JAN 4 1961

COMMITTEES:
FOREIGN RELATIONS
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Music Box, w/ Fed Gov.

January 2, 1961

file

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

I received your wire in regard to Frank B. Ellis and also your recent letter. I have Frank very much in mind and will be in touch with him in the next few days.

I received your most interesting letter from abroad and hope to have a chance to discuss your recent trip, as well as the problems we face in agriculture, sometime soon.

With kind personal regards.

Sincerely,

Jack

John F. Kennedy

JFK:el

Misc. Kennedy
Appr. file

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

August 12, 1960

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Allen:

On my return to Washington I want to take this time to thank you for your vote of confidence in Los Angeles.

I am looking forward to seeing you again and working with you during the crucial months ahead. With your support I know we will accomplish our purpose.

I am sending under separate cover a copy of my acceptance speech.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Jack Kennedy

John F. Kennedy

JFK:lbf

U. S. SENATOR...

JOHN F. KENNEDY
FOR PRESIDENT

★ ★ ★ ★

HEADQUARTERS • 261 CONSTITUTION AVE., N. W. • WASHINGTON, D. C. • NAtional 8-8206

June 27, 1960

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Allen:

I am enclosing for your consideration a statement recently issued by former Governor John S. Battle of Virginia. As you know, Governor Battle has for many years been one of the foremost Democratic and national leaders. I am most grateful for his kind words.

To clear up an apparent misunderstanding, I am also enclosing a copy of a statement which was released by my press secretary on my instructions.

I would be happy and proud to receive support from delegates from any part of the United States. Furthermore, if I am successful in Los Angeles, I hope we will have a united democratic party and that my candidacy will be supported in all sections of the country.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely yours,

John Kennedy

John F. Kennedy

JFK:am

26

JOHN F. KENNEDY
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:
FOREIGN RELATIONS
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Jan 2
file

February 26, 1959

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

As you probably know the International Wheat Ageement is scheduled to expire July 31, 1959. Representatives of the Governments which are participants in the Agreement are now meeting to renegotiate this treaty. We in the United States have a major interest in these negotiations, for the present imbalance between international wheat production and market availability has helped to aggravate our domestic wheat problems. I believe it is important that we encourage our negotiators to renew the Agreement and that we offer some suggestion concerning the broad lines that should be covered by it.

In addition, it seems to me that the International Wheat Council, which I hope will be formed under the Agreement, would be an excellent vehicle in which to launch a program of "Food for Peace."

I therefore propose to offer a resolution on Monday, March 2, which would (1) urge the negotiators to renew the International Wheat Agreement; (2) provide for an International Wheat Council; (3) establish in the Agreement minimum prices for wheat exporting countries and maximum prices for wheat importing countries; and (4) empower the International Wheat Council to encourage and co-ordinate the distribution of wheat on concessional terms to countries unable to purchase sufficient supplies in the commercial market to meet the nutritional needs of their people.

I invite you to join me as a sponsor of this resolution, so that we may demonstrate strong support for these proposals. I am enclosing a copy of the proposal. I would appreciate if it you would call my office (extension 4543) before Monday, March 2, if you would like to join me in the expression of these views.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

John F. Kennedy

JFK:ps

JOHN F. KENNEDY, MASS., CHAIRMAN

RICHARD B. RUSSELL, GA. STYLES BRIDGES, N. H.
MIKE MANSFIELD, MONT. JOHN W. BRICKER, OHIO

United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
THE SENATE RECEPTION ROOM
(PURSUANT TO S. RES. 145, 84TH CONGRESS)

March 5, 1957

Honorable Allen J. Ellender, Jr.
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Allen:

As you know, a five-man committee was appointed in the 84th Congress with the responsibility of reporting to the Senate its selection of the five outstanding deceased former Senators whose portraits are to be placed in the Senate Reception Room.

Since the creation of the Special Committee, it has sought guidance from a number of sources. The general public has been encouraged to participate by forwarding to us their choices for this great honor and the response has been gratifying. In order to avail ourselves of the knowledge and research of scholars, we appointed an Advisory Committee of nine historians and political scientists. They in turn nominated a panel of their colleagues and various other students of the Senate to whom we turned for expressions of opinion. This panel, incidentally, includes representatives from each of the 48 states.

Another service of the Advisory Committee was to prepare, at our request, criteria to serve as a basis for selecting former Senators for this tribute. Three were suggested: (1) that the Senators should be chosen without regard for their services in other offices; (2) that they should be distinguished for acts of statesmanship transcending party and state lines; and (3) that the definition of "statesmanship" may well include leadership in national thought and Constitutional interpretation as well as in legislation. These criteria are, of course, advisory rather than binding upon those who have responded to our request for assistance.

To help insure that we do not overlook any worthy candidates we should like the counsel of as many of our colleagues as possible before attempting to fulfill our responsibilities to the Senate. A number of our associates already have nominated various former Senators for consideration. I should like at this time to extend an invitation to you to assist the Special Committee by giving us the benefit of your wisdom with respect to this matter.

For your guidance I am enclosing a copy of the resolution by which the Committee was established. It has since been modified (S.R. 297) to provide that all five Senators be selected at the same time and that a final report be submitted to the Senate on or before May 1, 1957.

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,

John F. Kennedy

JFK:ps
Enclosure 1

Dept - Interior
REC'D SEP 11 1961
General

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
WASHINGTON

September 6, 1961

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

I have your letter of August 31st with the enclosed copy of the resolution from the Plaquemines Parish Police Jury requesting a review of the 1956 ruling on the Floyd Wallis matter.

The resolution has been brought to the attention of the Lands Division for appropriate review and further reply to you.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kennedy

RECD MAR 7 1961

re: Fed. Contempt
Action Against
Shelby Jackson
Ala

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
WASHINGTON

March 6, 1961

Dear Senator:

Thank you very much for your telegram regarding Shelby Jackson. I appreciate your informing me of your views in this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kennedy

The Honorable Allen J. Ellender
The United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Music - Kennedy

REC'D SEP 13 1960

. S. SENATOR...

JOHN F. KENNEDY

FOR PRESIDENT

★ ★ ★ ★

HEADQUARTERS · 1106 CONNECTICUT AVE., N.W. · WASHINGTON, D. C. · DISTRICT 7-1717

August 31, 1960

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
3900 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Ellender:

I have prepared a compilation of statements on the religion question so that we might all have conveniently in one memo many of the important statements that Senator Kennedy has made on this subject.

I am sure you have already found, as those of us involved in the primaries found, that there are many people whose interest in the religion question is born of a genuine desire to make a judgement based on the facts.

We found at the outset in West Virginia that the problem of Senator Kennedy's religion was acute and that we initially ran considerably behind because of this issue. However, after the issue was met forthrightly and Senator Kennedy spoke out and conveyed his convictions on this subject there was a tremendous switch in voter sentiment. We found that by a vigorous but sympathetic effort, people can be convinced.

We have set up a community relations committee headed by Mr. James W. Wine, former Associate General Secretary of the Council of Churches. The committee is located at 1801 K Street, Room 205, and is available to assist in helping to answer any questions that might arise in this field and to give suggestions as to how the subject can be approached most effectively.

I am sure that we all agree that if we retain a courteous and understanding attitude and a willingness to answer all questions on this issue that we will have the same result in November that we had in West Virginia, and that the so-called religious issue will evaporate.

If I personally can be of any assistance in this matter, let me know.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kennedy

Robert F. Kennedy

RFK/wh

28

E Personal

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

file

Dear Senator Ellender,

I just wanted you to know how appreciative I was of your offer to help on our Puerto Rican amendment if it had been necessary.

It was damn nice of you and I am most grateful

Bob Kunkel

Misc Papers

Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate

October 1, 1968

Dear Senator:

In behalf of my family, may I extend our most sincere thanks to you for sending the Kennedy Library an autographed copy of your book, U.S. GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IN SOUTH ASIA.

With my thanks again,

Sincerely,

Honorable Allen J. Ellender
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

E Personal

Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate

Oct 21, 1965

Dear Senator,

Before leaving for Saigon today I just want to thank you for all your help.

Ted Kennedy

Edward M. Kennedy
Massachusetts

file

Sen E - Personal
24 Oct 63

United States Senate

My dear Senator -

Again many thanks
for the delightful lunch. We
have all the ingredients for
such a lunch up in
Massachusetts but the Illinois
touch is essential to make it
perfect. With every good wish

Ted Kennedy

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

London, March 17, 1938.

My dear Senator Ellender:

I have received your letter of March 5, 1938 regarding the desire of Miss Rita Hovey-King to be presented at a Court this year, and am glad to hear from you.

Apparently there is nothing I can do with respect to Miss Hovey-King, for on my arrival in London I found waiting for me a letter of February 17, 1938 from Lieutenant Commander Alvin Hovey-King saying that his daughter would be unable to come to Europe this year and that he therefore withdrew her name as an applicant for presentation this season..

With many thanks for your good wishes and with warm regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Joseph P. Kennedy

The Honorable

Allen J. Ellender,

United States Senate.