

Jack T. Conway Oral History Interview – RFK#2, 04/11/1972
Administrative Information

Creator: Jack T. Conway
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Biographical Note

Conway was a labor official; the Executive Director of the Industrial Union Department in the AFL-CIO from 1963 through 1968; the Deputy Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency from 1961 to 1963; and the Deputy Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity from 1964 to 1965, during which time he headed the Community Action Program as part of the Lyndon B. Johnson Administration's War on Poverty and worked on several other programs of the same nature. In this interview Conway discusses working with John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1960 presidential campaign; the negative reaction to the choice of Johnson for JFK's running mate; labor leadership and JFK's campaign; unions and the religious issue during the 1960 election; discussing presidential appointments with JFK after the election; Conway's role in JFK's Administration; the Housing and Home Finance Agency, legislation, and working with Congress; accelerated public works, the Department of Commerce, and problems with the extent of presidential powers; Walter Reuther and his relationship with JFK; confrontations between Johnson and Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]; working with RFK on civil rights marches and their legislative demands; and interactions with RFK from 1964 through 1968, among other issues.

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Jack T. Conway

JACK T. CONWAY
-3-6-73
DATE

James B. Rhodes

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Second Oral History Interview

with

JACK T. CONWAY

April 11, 1972
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: One thing I wanted to ask you: In your dealings with [Kenneth P.] O'Donnell, [John F.] Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, as they became political and focused on 1960, were people like [Leonard] Woodcock and [Mildred] Millie Jeffrey aware of how many contacts you were having with the Kennedys or your conversations about various states?

CONWAY: Well, I think we generally settled on a pattern of operation. I worked the political side of it with Ken and Bob Kennedy, and Leonard Woodcock dealt more with the substantive side of the Democratic [National] Convention with [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen and [Myer] Mike Feldman. Millie Jeffrey, because of her special relationship with the Democratic party in Michigan, was an important part of the picture, but more from the Michigan side than anything else. She was not particularly well informed of what we were doing, except as it fitted into our needs to have her function within the Democratic party picture in Michigan. Now, of course, all of this eventually blended into a generally accepted pattern that everybody was aware of. But my relationship with O'Donnell and Bob Kennedy was very close, very tight, and with no breaks in the communication between us.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Now, you talked about trying to work the thing out for Hubert Humphrey to get the vice presidential nomination. Had you had any other conversations, or had you had conversations about anyone else with any of the Kennedy people during the spring or

was that really the focus on it?

CONWAY: No, we were dealing exclusively with putting the Humphrey-Kennedy thing together until the deadline passed on the Monday night, at which point this committee of the labor people began to develop alternates. And we settled on [Stuart] Symington, largely as a concession to [James B.] Jimmy Carey, who for some strange reason had been a reluctant person in going along with the idea of consolidating our support behind Kennedy. Besides that, Symington, probably, as an alternative was the strongest of the ones that we considered. At no time did we consider Lyndon Johnson, so that his ultimate selection by the president was a very bruising and difficult experience for all of the labor people.

HACKMAN: Yeah. How was the Symington choice communicated to the Kennedy people, or was it clearly before . . .

CONWAY: Directly, directly. I think Walter [P. Reuther] called Bob Kennedy and advised him. I talked with Ken O'Donnell, I remember, directly, either a few minutes before or a few minutes after. So that they both heard it at approximately the same time.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

CONWAY: That was Tuesday morning. Then, having, you know, kind of concluded that, we set aside that problem and concentrated almost entirely on the nomination of Jack. Walter Reuther's energies went into trying to break the "Stop-Kennedy" effort by the liberals, as they were called. So that absorbed an enormous amount of his time. And at some of the meetings I went to--some of them I skipped because I was working on other things, but he did meet, as I indicated, with Mrs. [Eleanor R.] Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson and [A. S.] Mike Monroney, [Thomas K.] Finletter, [Herbert H.] Lehman, just about everybody that was there that was tied in with that effort. Kennedy, of course, once the Humphrey thing was out of it, turned to Orville Freeman to second his nomination and began to make other arrangements.

Of course, after the election, arrangements were made for our committee to go over and meet with the nominee the first thing in the morning. When we met with him, we preceded the group of governors that were coming in. I indicated that [Arthur J.] Goldberg didn't show up at our suite. We finally went over, the four of us, and Goldberg just arrived at the nominee's suite as we did.

When we went in, Bob was there, and he obviously was very distressed. Ken O'Donnell looked like a ghost. Jack Kennedy was very nervous. It was obvious that they were going to convey some information to us that we weren't going to like. And it was a very strange meeting. The president dwelt considerably on the special session that Lyndon Johnson had arranged for before we would close the Congress out. Kennedy was very disturbed about what Lyndon Johnson could do to him in this special session and also felt that it was going to be a very

difficult election and that what he was obligated to do was to offer the vice presidency to Lyndon Johnson. And he said, "I don't see any reason in the world why he would want it."

So there was a lot of discussion, Goldberg and Reuther doing most of the talking, and Walter indicating that he didn't see why he would want it either and Goldberg supporting the position that the president was taking, that he could do a lot of damage. Well, it was at this point I made my calculation that Goldberg was privy to information that the rest of us weren't. At a certain point I interrupted and said to the president that Lyndon Johnson will accept it if you offer it to him. And I turned around to Bobby Kennedy and I said, "We've come a long way" And I said, "If you do this, you're going to fuck everything up." He just was all shook up.

So then, the next five minutes was spent on trying to work out with Jack Kennedy how he could offer the thing to Lyndon Johnson in such a way that he would turn it down. Then we left. As we left, in came the governors. If I remember, it was [Michael V.] Mike DiSalle and [David L.] Dave Lawrence and Mennen Williams and [Abraham A.] Abe Ribicoff.

HACKMAN: Lindsay Almond, I believe, was there, do you remember?

CONWAY: I'm not sure. But the ones that I recall are those four, there were two or three more. We went directly back to our hotel. And the last thing that was agreed to was that we would get back together again for another meeting with Jack Kennedy at about 11 o'clock. And, of course, the time dragged on, and the more it dragged on the greater the tension was. And it was finally late in the afternoon--meantime I'd talked to O'Donnell a couple of times on the phone and he was agreeing with me how serious this was--and he called back and said that he and Bobby were on their way over to the hotel, that there wasn't going to be a meeting, they were coming over to see us. So we waited for them. And, of course, the traffic was heavy and they were delayed--either that or they hadn't left.

We were all in the parlor of Reuther's suite when Bobby Kennedy and O'Donnell arrived. Just as they arrived, the president stepped out and made his announcement on television. So we were getting it on television while O'Donnell and Bobby were in the bedroom that we used as an office. And they were just frightened stiff. So I said to Bob, I said, "Go in and tell them what you have to tell them and keep right on going, don't stay. Don't try to reason or argue or anything, just go in and tell them and get out." And, of course, that's what they did. And Bobby hardly had a chance to get the words out of his mouth before everybody just exploded. Walter's reaction was stronger than anybody else's. He was just livid with rage, and he was profane. Oh, God, it's hard to describe his reaction. And it was because he felt that he had been led on, mistreated, all of this sort of stuff. It

really was kind of a shattering thing.

HACKMAN: When O'Donnell and Robert Kennedy were on the way over though, they were clearly on the way over to tell you that Johnson had been selected. They knew.

CONWAY: Yes.

HACKMAN: And the surprise was that it had come on TV that soon.

CONWAY: Yeah, that's right. In other words, the carriers of the message were delayed by maybe a few minutes, and that was enough to spoil the whole thing as far as their being able to tell us.

HACKMAN: Did he describe to you at that point, or did he later, as to what happened in those hours and the way the offer was made?

CONWAY: No, that was put together at a later time. What happened, of course, is that they had very serious consternation in their own ranks when they did this. A lot of people that were very closely tied in with the campaign felt that they had been shafted. So they had a very serious morale problem. And it wasn't until, really, the next day, I guess, that things began to be put together. But the significant thing was that [Joseph L., Jr.] Joe Rauh, who had been extremely good--by this time he was full circle around in support of Kennedy--stood in front of the television cameras and just bleated, in effect, "Say it isn't so, Jack," you know, "This is a double, double-cross," and all of this sort of stuff. And this was all going on, and what we could see was, you know, the disintegration of a very good situation.

I had to figure out some way of bringing it to a head. So I just waited after Bob and Ken had left for a few minutes until a little more of the emotion got out of it, then I said something to Walter Reuther to the effect, "Well, you've been saying that we needed a president who could make decisions, and this one has just made his first decisions, and this one had just made his first decision." And it kind of shook Walter. He stopped, and he looked at me, and he said, "Yeah, that's right."

By this time, the Michigan delegation has just gone out of its mind and it's in a caucus. And Williams is leading the charge with Neil Staebler to have a floor fight against Lyndon Johnson's nomination. So we had to figure what the hell to do. And we had serious logistical problems because the freeways would jam and you couldn't get to the convention. So we really sat and treated it almost like we would have treated a strike situation, you know, where you have to make decisions and implement them in a very short period of time as you go into a deadline.

So we reached for the straw--I suppose, is the way to describe it--of getting some public statement from Lyndon Johnson that would indicate that he supported the civil rights plank that we'd spent a great deal of time fashioning for the convention. So I called and got [Robert] Bob Oliver on the phone in Lyndon Johnson's suite, told him what the problem was, and asked him if he would check with Lyndon Johnson and find out if he would issue a public statement on this. He did, called right back and said yes he would. So we sat down and wrote the statement, dictated it over the phone. He checked it out and agreed to it. We then typed it up and said, "Call us back as soon as it's been given to the press." And within about three or four minutes, they did.

In the meantime, we were trying to figure out how we could get this to the convention. And so I reached out for Paul Schrade, who knew the convention--he was there--and I got Bob Oliver to go to the certain door at the convention and meet Schrade who didn't have a delegate's badge or access to the floor. Schrade and Oliver met. Schrade took the Lyndon Johnson statement on the civil rights thing to the Michigan caucus, which was in session at the time. He had a hell of a time getting in because the cops were stationed outside with instructions not to let anybody in. But he finally wore them down and got in and talked to Woodcock, who took the statement and then used it to take the problem on straight, frontally. And he finally did, for the third successive convention, take the delegation totally away from Mennen Williams, with it ending up finally that Williams and Staebler were the only two that didn't support the position to go along with the president. And then you know what they did on the floor.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

CONWAY: There's the famous picture, Williams screaming his opposition. And then it just kind of collapsed, you know, the wind was out of it. It took us about, well, I suppose, three, four, five days, a week to get ourselves back up off the mat and start looking at what the hell we're going to do about it.

HACKMAN: Yeah. In that first meeting, when John Kennedy was describing the necessity to offer it to Lyndon Johnson, did they go into detail on how they would try to offer it and have it rejected or . . .

CONWAY: Well, that was developed in that meeting. The strategy for that was developed in the meeting, when actually they had already offered it to him and I think that he had already accepted it. And I think that the effort that was made--you know, the thing that delayed things and so on--was probably the product of our meeting and not . . .

HACKMAN: Yeah, right, okay.

CONWAY: And that's one of the reasons that Bobby was so disturbed. He knew what the hell was going to happen.

HACKMAN: Did you ever discuss with him later as to what his feelings were about picking Johnson?

CONWAY: No, no. I talked with O'Donnell about it. O'Donnell, you know, described how people felt. My reaction always in these things is that it's unimportant. Once the event has taken place, what the hell, you can sit around and drink beer and talk about things like that if you want, but nothing changes. So I just, in effect, wiped it clean.

HACKMAN: What kind of contacts did you have with other labor groups that were upset? Do you remember the [George] Meany . . .

CONWAYS: Well, then we went directly into that hysterical period. Then we have Meany calling the executive council meeting.

HACKMAN: Council meeting, right.

CONWAY: So Reuther's role in that was very critical, not only in turning the situation around as far as Michigan was concerned, but dealing with the leadership of the labor movement generally. It was an emotional thing, it had to be bled. So that's really what happened.

But it jaded everything, and the result was that we were in a horrible vacuum. The two things that happened fairly soon after that--oh, it was of some significance--the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] had an executive council meeting at the Drake hotel in Chicago. That is their usual late summer meeting. By this time, they'd recovered, and we were prepared to begin to look at the campaign. Again, Walter took an aggressive stance and went in and recommended that we create a half-million dollar voter registration fund. As his method of operation was, he said, "If the AFL-CIO will support this, the UAW [United Automobile, Aircraft, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America] will contribute" you know, like two hundred thousand dollars, I forget what the figure was, to the fund. It was always his way of trying to get the other guys to do the right thing.

So at that point, we made arrangements to get together in Washington to start talking about the campaign itself and how it would be structured. They had just moved to the Standard Oil Building on Constitution Avenue, so I went up. Two guys were kind of sitting in the middle of some filing cabinets and disheveled furniture, not organized. So we started talking about the actual campaign.

HACKMAN: Let me bust in just a second. At the convention, had you or Reuther made any efforts on the appointments of the chairman of the Democratic National Committee? [Henry M.] Jackson was appointed temporarily.

CONWAY: No, we just assumed that was a part of the deal.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

CONWAY: No, we weren't interested in that particularly.

HACKMAN: Yeah, okay.

CONWAY: I talked to Bob and Ken about the campaign.

HACKMAN: Yeah, yeah.

CONWAY: So anyway, we joked about that a little bit and then started talking about the campaign. Bob said, they were considering making Neil Staebler the campaign director.

It
was at that point that Bob said, "Well, I have no other alternative except to do it myself then." And so we talked about the pros and cons of that and concluded that that was probably the best thing to do.

And so he took that. He took the general responsibility for direction of the campaign, and Ken took the responsibility of scheduling and traveling with the candidate, him being the direct contact. And I agreed to work in the campaign, but to do it my own way. I could work best by being completely independent and outside. So I operated from my own office in Detroit, where I had a completely independent network of communications and intelligence and so on, and was able to, in a sense, double-check things. But in order to be effective, we agreed that I had to be directly tied in with the scheduling operation and be able to communicate promptly at any time. So we worked out a very simple system on my being able to plug in at the scheduling office with the ranking person there, whose responsibility it was to convey to Ken O'Donnell immediately that I was calling and then Ken would call me. And it worked extremely well. So I was always in possession of the scheduling information and would be in a position to look at each of the locations that they were going to from the point of view of who was a known, positive worker that can put things together and who was a phoney and how do you do this and that and the other stuff. That's essentially the method that we used.

HACKMAN: Yeah. But this is basically nationwide on your part or is this limited to a region primarily?

CONWAY: Well, it was nationwide, but my interests were confined to twelve of the fourteen states.

HACKMAN: Yeah, right.

CONWAY: Although when we got into Texas, I did work on that because, even though Johnson was working hard at it, they didn't know how to produce crowds and so on. And so in the Fort Worth schedule we worked with our UAW locals there and the Oil Workers [Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers International Union] and the Steelworkers [United Steelworkers of America] and so on. So even in Texas we were able to do some good. But, basically, I concentrated on the twelve of the fourteen states, which were Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, California.

HACKMAN: Hadn't Walter Reuther gone to Hyannis Port for a couple of days after the convention?

CONWAY: Yes. Before that, though, we went to Washington and met with both Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy during the special session. Now, whether that was first--I think it was first because it was the most upsetting experience that I had, because these two guys obviously distrusted each other. They had set Kennedy up in a temporary office in the Capitol so that he was able to conduct his nominee's business and at the same time not take too much time from the Senate floor. And he had to be protected from the general hoards of people in his Senate office, so

he was in a dinky little hideaway. He had lost his voice, and he had a serious strep throat problem. We talked with him and it was so--here was this guy, he could hardly function. So we just kind of talked through the special session and what problems there might be and reviewed with him how we were going to operate. He knew all about it because I think Bob had filled him all in. And then we agreed to see him later on.

And then we went over and met with Lyndon Johnson in his spacious majority leader suite and the antics that that son of a bitch went through for our benefit. You know, we had to pay, you know, pay and pay and pay for having supported Kennedy over him and that sort of stuff. There was a long-time personal relationship between Walter and Johnson that I didn't share, and so I just was the, you know, fifth wheel, sat through the whole thing. It was disgusting, but it was necessary. So we did that.

Then, we did put in a great deal of thought about issues and the nature of the campaign and the things that the president had to undertake. We did take a trip to Hyannis Port. We didn't spend two days there, we spent the better part of a day. We saw Jack Kennedy early in the morning for an hour or so while he was starting the day. He was eating breakfast and Caroline [B. Kennedy] was, you know, crawling around. Mrs. [Jacqueline B.] Kennedy wasn't conspicuous but she was there.

Just about the time that we were getting into the things that we wanted to talk about, the governor of Ohio, Mike DiSalle, arrived with a couple of his entourage. So Kennedy was kind of upset. He hadn't really wanted to meet with DiSalle and he was stuck. And so he asked us to stay, suggested that we take a swim if we wanted to. It was late October and I was amazed at the idea of taking a swim, but we went down and got some bathing suits and went out on the beach, thinking that we would just sit in the sun. It was quite warm. And Mrs. Kennedy came out and joined us, and we spent a couple of very pleasant hours on the beach with her. When she went in swimming, she swam out to the rock and back. That was more than the masculine pride of Reuther and Conway could take so we went in and swam too. And it was quite pleasant, we had a lot of fun together.

We talked at length with Mrs. Kennedy, and she really was obsessed with this whole idea of the change in her life, the change in Kennedy's life, and how do you protect against assassinations. That was the discussion that day. And she said, in effect, "you've gone through this now. What did you do? How are you. . . ." And so we talked about Walter's being shot and Victor [G. Reuther] and the security steps that we had taken and how difficult it was on your daily family living and so on. Walter was very good at this and was quite reassuring to her that, you know, what it did was to force you to depend more and more on yourselves and your own inner resources. You had to protect yourself against being hussled around too conspicuously with lots of protection and so on.

She said one other thing that really shook Walter up. She said something to the effect, at one point she asked him about something and the

way his generation handled things. Walter always thought of himself as being a young man and suddenly there was an age gap between her especially and. . . . She identified with me--I was the same age as Jack Kennedy--but considered Walter an older man. Walter flushed, and I just kind of stuck that in my head because it really made sense for the first time. I was looking at a guy that was older than my generation which was taking power in the country. And it explains in many ways some of the things that developed in Walter's relationship with Jack Kennedy over the next few years.

But we got back and had another fairly extended discussion with the president on economics and domestic matters. At this point, they broke up, the team of economics advisers that he had come in from the universities, and we kibitzed with them for a little while. It was an overlap because we were talking about some of the same problems that they were coming to talk to him about. Then we took off. We spent a few minutes with Pierre Salinger and went back to the airport and flew back to the city of Detroit.

HACKMAN: Can you remember specific things, economic issues or other issues, that you were urging him to take a stand on or say something on?

CONWAY: Oh, I think what we did is we left him a couple of fairly substantial memoranda on this. What the actual subjects were. . . . That was the practice that we developed, of leaving with him, you know, our organized thoughts on paper. If he wanted any additional documentation and so on, we'd simply organize it and get it to him. As you know, he consumed this kind of stuff so fast that it turned out to be the best way of communicating with him.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Was there much dissatisfaction from your point of view or Reuther's point of view as the campaign went on, in terms of what he was saying?

CONWAY: Well, we thought he was not as aggressive as he could have been on some of the questions but it didn't disturb us a great deal. He was quite responsive. We would feed ideas. . . . Again, I left this kind of thing largely to Walter and Leonard Woodcock. These were the people who Nat Weinberg and all the guys that are idea types--think that the way the words come out is what wins elections. To the extent that they were absorbed in that kind of stuff, it freed me to be absorbed in the mechanics of the election. And so I would always just say, send your stuff to Ted Sorensen or call Mike Feldman up or do this or do that.

HACKMAN: Had there been any discussions on what you might possibly be able to do in that short session of Congress after the convention? What you should try to propose or

CONWAY: No, I think the general feeling we had in the meeting with Jack at the Capitol that day was, get the damn thing over with as fast as possible, that no good can come out of it, and that yet it had to be a respectable showing because Johnson had put so much stress on it. But the problem was going to be how do you get Johnson to agree to wrap it up and get it over with. It turned out that both guys were so fatigued from the experience at the convention that I think their general health helped to bring it to an end faster than anything else.

HACKMAN: Yeah, yeah. In that. . .

CONWAY: I don't even remember what the agenda was at the special session and I don't recall what came out of it.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Any problems then in putting together the registration drive, either opposition to Roy Reuther or then Frank Thompson's coming in or the way the funds were handled?

CONWAY: No. Roy Reuther was a kind of a favorite of George Meany's. Roy was a very lovable guy and a tremendous ally to me in this whole period, because he worked the relationships with other unions and the COPE [Committee on Political Education, AFL-CIO] people generally. He and Frank Thompson had worked on registration campaigns before, so that they were very supportive of each other. And this is the first time that Roy got caught up with Old Man [William J. Sr.] Billy Green and became quite impressed with him as a mechanic. And so the thing really came together quite well. I don't know, it's always hard to measure the effects of these registration drives as to whether the money is worth it and so on. But it was a good interim activity, it was the thing that got everybody kind of lined up and functioning, and they forgot about the Lyndon Johnson thing at the convention. More and more, the logic of the president's decision became clear. A lot of the oldtimers rationalized it, much on the theory that Franklin Roosevelt had to do this to get elected the first time and so on. So that I think, by the time the campaign actually got started on Labor Day, most of the venom was out of it. Some of the blacks were very helpful in this regard. I remember Horace Sheffield, really took a very constructive role in, you know, talking to some of the more agitated whites, saying, in effect, you know, "This guy isn't that bad and if we can get Kennedy elected it's worth it." So it kind of shook out. Matter of fact, it ultimately came around to the fact that it was harder to get some of the entrenched anti-Catholic labor leaders to be supportive of Kennedy.

HACKMAN: That's going to be [Albert J.] Al Hayes, primarily?

CONWAY: Al Hayes and guys like this, yeah. They never really did come around. So that that turned out to be just as important as the other thing. But anyway, the campaigns have traditionally started in Detroit on Labor Day and so we spent a great deal of time in our preparations on that. I was quite apprehensive about that first day because, despite the fact that, you know,

Kennedy was an articulate, educated speaker, he was not the kind of guy that could stand up in front of a huge crowd and deliver a speech that would reach them. It's a hell of a different thing. And I was concerned about his reading a speech to a Labor Day rally in Detroit and had recognized that there probably was no other way of doing it. So we spent quite a bit of time trying to figure how to handle the thing that day. I was also concerned about the fact that [Patrick V.] McNamara just didn't like Kennedy. He was running for reelection and I was worried about, you know, the possible frictions that might exist there.

But anyway, we put together an extremely heavy schedule that Labor Day, starting in Detroit, then went to Pontiac, then went from there, I guess, to Lansing, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, then back to Flint. We had no idea, you know, how much we'd be able to cover. We felt that it was important to get the maximum impact and so we concentrated on turnouts. I don't even remember what he said at the speech, but I knew that it was going to be a whopper before he even came down from the hotel because the crowds were strong. I damn near lost my life that day when the crowds broke over the barrier and nobody was prepared for it. Actually it was Frank Reeves and me who saved the president from injury. We just threw ourselves into the lead crowd and split it and took him through the city hall door. People got hurt. But then it was a question of recognizing that we had, you know, some kind of a phenomenon occurring. So we rode with it all day, and I watched. That was the first time I ever saw jumpers, squealers. All of those things were there that day. When we drove through the state fairgrounds, my God, people were ready to strip his clothes off. So we lost time all day long, it kept building up. And as we'd lose time, more people would come at the meetings that they were waiting for. So I guess we really didn't finish up until three or four hours after we'd programmed it.

HACKMAN: I had heard that there was a problem on scheduling that day. Sort of the party people or the labor people, who controlled the candidate is the way someone has put it. Do you remember a lot of were Williams' people disturbed? Were these people. . . .

CONWAY: Oh, there always was that kind of thing. There was some of that, but we just simply took the position that this was Labor Day and that there's no reason to have any conflict.

HACKMAN: Would the same kinds of differences take place every time you came into Michigan, later in the campaign?

CONWAY: Every place. Well, they take place all over. I mean, it's more so in Michigan perhaps than in other places because the UAW is so big and so distinct from the actual party. But that day was a clear indication to me that we had a very strong campaign that could be built. And it did build.

By the time he came back on his second trip, which, I guess, was in late September or early October, mid-October--I'm not sure what the dates were now--a number of things had happened to Kennedy. He was a much more effective campaigner. We paced that one slower, based upon the earlier experience. We did let the party run that one completely. I remember I spent most of my time on the train just talking to party people, particularly Pat McNamara. That's the day that I think we turned Pat around. I must have spent, all told, three hours with him.

HACKMAN: What was his objection? Was it . . .

CONWAY: Oh, he never would articulate it--same kinds of things that George Meany objected to. Pat was a strange kind of a guy.

I had a personal relationship with him that was very unusual, because when Blair Moody died and Pat McNamara was in the campaign, I went to Pat immediately and said, "This could be very difficult, but I want you to know that I'm going to work to pull the whole UAW around behind you." So from the very beginning we had a very strong personal relationship. He and my dad had known each other for many, many years--both plumbers.

So as a result of that trip, Pat McNamara scrapped his whole TV campaign, went back with [Robert] Bob Perrin and recast his television spots, changed his whole campaign and piggybacked on Kennedy. He just had very simple spots, and he won with a terrific. . . . And he became a very effective senator, as a matter of fact. Up to that point he'd been pretty much a loner and a grouser. But Kennedy was able to work with Pat, Pat was willing to work with the president, and the result was that they became a hell of a team. Pat took leadership in a lot of basic legislation during Kennedy's term and did very well.

HACKMAN: Yeah. What was the strategy on the role that Reuther himself would play during the campaign period, low profile or sort of . . .

CONWAY: Well, no, he would spend most of his time on, you know, labor gatherings and that sort of stuff. We didn't want a repeat of the 1958 campaign, where Walter had been a conspicuous target of the right wing. So it was much more of a low profile thing for Walter. He got into the role of, you know, kind of subject matter adviser sort of thing. So he was quite content to work on the internal union stuff and also to meet from time to time with the president and exchange ideas and so on. The UAW, and there's no question about it, did a massive and effective job in that campaign.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Did you talk afterwards with Robert Kennedy or with John Kennedy about the performance of other unions in the campaign, can you remember?

CONWAY: Well, Bob used to say flatly that it was the UAW that was the spine of the whole thing and that there were very few other unions that do the same thing. Some of the smaller ones were very good. Textile Workers [Union of America] worked awfully hard, and

Bill Duchessi is a very strong supporter of Kennedy from the New England area. There were a few other unions that worked hard. But it was the UAW that was in the strategic places. That's one of the reasons that when it's clicking, when it's working, it can be very effective political force.

The other thing that occurred, of course, that probably had some significance during that period was the way the religious issue was building. We had considerable discussion about this. We became quite concerned about it, particularly in places like Indiana and Ohio. Southern Ohio is very bad in this regard. We had sensed in the Wisconsin primary how deep the religious thing was, and with the Humphrey disaffection, that wasn't healing very well. But we were particularly concerned about what was happening in the plants in Indiana and Ohio and Missouri and places like this. So as we were discussing this whole thing, we put an issue of paper together, the UAW paper, and decided to bring the whole damn thing out on top of the table. I was in charge of all of the literature and stuff that we were putting out. Roy Reuther would develop the materials, and then he and I and Henry Santiestevan would sit down and make the decisions. And on one particular issue of the paper we did something we'd never done before or since; we took the whole front page and put a line drawing of the Statue of Liberty with a hood over the head of the lady and a simple headline that said, "Which do you choose, liberty or bigotry?" and put that out, a million and a half copies, into the plants. Well, Jesus, it was like we were in the eye of a hurricane, you know. But it jolted everybody and made them think about the issue and got it right up on top of the table.

Then, of course, right on the heels of this was the decision to do the Houston ministers' thing, which, of course, was a magnificent performance. It did bring the issue up in a way that it could be faced. And then, of course, with the Protestant ministers on the thirtieth of October hitting the pulpits and so on, it became. . . .

But we were losing ground pretty fast in places like Ohio and I was worried about it. That was a state we should have carried. But, boy, you could just feel it going away from you down there in Cincinnati and Columbus and Springfield and Dayton and all those places. Of course, we never expected to carry Indiana. Indiana you can win on a primary but, unless it's a major sweep, you can't expect to carry it.

But that was the only outstanding thing that we did that was a part of a larger strategy. The Republicans chose to delay their counter attack until President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower came to Detroit and spoke to the Economic Club and singled us out for this horrible piece of propaganda that we had injected into the campaign and tried to do a religious thing in reverse on us. Anyway, that's essentially where it was. In the final days of the campaign we just concentrated on, you know, election machinery, election day machinery and so on.

HACKMAN: You might want to go into some detail on some of the big states. I don't have questions on the labor situation in the big states. I don't know how much you remember off the top of your head.

CONWAY: I don't think it's particularly worth it. That's just straight political campaign stuff, and it's the same in that election as any other election.)

HACKMAN: Yeah, okay.

CONWAY: But anyway, we did everything we could. They closed the polls and counted the ballots, and it became very clear it was going to be a very close election. And I was in touch all that night with Bob at Hyannis Port. He called me a half a dozen times, and I talked with him about the same number of times. We were able to project, based on our own precinct analysis, that we had Michigan by a comfortable margin. But Michigan is always a confusing state because of the way the ballots are counted. So when it became closer and closer, the worries mounted at the headquarters in Hyannis Port and so they kept calling back, "Are you sure?" kind of thing, you know. And I just kept saying, "Sure, we're sure," there was no big problem about Michigan. And, of course, they were concerned about Illinois and Texas the same way.

But anyway, when we finally went to bed it was 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. And about 10 o'clock, I guess it was, I got up and I was in my bathrobe. My sister-in-law and my wife were watching TV with me. We had a very dedicated, loyal woman who worked for us, took care of our house and our kids during the day when they were home from school. And she was ironing or doing something in the kitchen where the phone was. The phone rang, and she came out into the living room and her eyes were wide, and she said, "Mr. Conway." She said, "there's a man on the phone who wants to talk to you and he says his name is Jack Kennedy." She was really just stumped.

So I went to the phone and he, you know, in his way, thanked me and said a lot of things that he probably shouldn't have said. But he then asked me if I would call Walter to thank him, and I said, "No, I won't do that. If you want to thank him, you call him yourself. I'm certainly not going to do it." And I know he did, but I don't know whether he did it right away because he left the house and went immediately to the church at that point. And that's where he, in effect, accepted the fact that he had won. And I remember that he, you know, was very gracious with his mother and so on. And then he proceeds to announce that the first thing he wanted the American public to know was that he was reappointing J. Edgar Hoover and General [Lewis B.] Hershey and Allen Dulles. And I said, "Shit."

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

CONWAY: One thing I forgot that is important in the convention is that the California delegation was very confused because of the way it was put together. One of the objectives that we set for ourselves was, we knew we couldn't pick up much more than the delegates that we could count on, but we wanted to make sure that, in the actual nomination, that Kennedy got more votes out of the California delegation than Stevenson did. And this took a considerable amount of work. Paul Schrade, who had been a Stevenson supporter--Stevenson loyalist, really, would be a better way of putting it--and who had agreed with me earlier that Kennedy should be the nominee, took this responsibility on and did a very effective job. We were able to break a few of the delegates loose and to get them to switch their votes to Kennedy. Paul became a very important person in Bobby Kennedy's life, of course, in the ensuing years. And also he had a very good rapport with Jack Kennedy too. They all had great respect for him.

HACKMAN: Can you remember what opinion Robert Kennedy and Ken O'Donnell, especially, had of [Jesse M.] Jess Unruh based on the '60 convention and campaign?

CONWAY: Well, Unruh was the guy that they settled on as the manager of the Kennedy forces. Ken was always very pro-Jess Unruh. Bob was always pro-Unruh but concerned about the fact that he was too much of a factionalist and drove people away. And, he was always open to setting up an independent operation. We functioned always outside of the Unruh thing. The theory was that if Ken and I were to assess the California thing and we disagreed, that it was because we each were operating differently in the state. I think that while Unruh is a skillful man, he was really such a factionalist that he would drive people away and could damage the cause. He got better as time went on. But that was quite a concern, not only in that election, but in subsequent elections in California.

HACKMAN: Okay. Unless there's anything else on the campaign, maybe I can just ask you what you started spending your time on after the election.

CONWAY: Well, I've already covered the trip to Hyannis Port and so on. We spent a good deal of time in that period talking with Bob and, by this time, Ralph Dungan on the key people for the administration and so on. Walter was, of course, concerned primarily about the Cabinet secretaries and so on. I was involved with Ralph Dungan on a substantially broader talent selection bit and the whole question of. . . . This involved an infinite number of meetings, I don't know how many, back and forth.

HACKMAN: Most taking place where?

CONWAY: In Washington primarily. A lot of it on the telephone, some of it in quickie meetings. I think we visited with Jack Kennedy at the N Street house maybe two or three times,

I don't know how many. But the ones that stood out, of course. . . . there was general agreement quickly on Stewart Udall and others. We were concerned about the Department of Labor. George Meany was hostile to Goldberg for some strange reason, and we had a little bit of euchring and maneuvering to bring that around to the point where he was acceptable.

HACKMAN: But you people had no problem with Goldberg on that appointment?

CONWAY: No, no. Walter was strong for Goldberg and I didn't have any feelings about it one way or the other. I don't think that the secretary of labor is that important. I was asked my assessment of [Robert S.] Bob McNamara since I seemed to know him better than anybody else. He was being considered for the [Department of the] Treasury and for the Defense Department. We talked about that a good bit of the time. I felt that he'd make a good secretary of defense; I didn't know about the treasury thing. We had no objections to Douglas Dillon, and that's the way it finally came out.

The place that Walter put most of his emphasis was on the secretary of state. Mostly he was interested in blocking [J. William] Fulbright, because of the southern manifesto business and the fact that he thought this would be misunderstood. So that there was a lot of back-and-forth about the secretary of state. We joked about it afterwards, but at the point that Dean Rusk's name was raised, Walter was very puzzled--this was just before it happened; I guess it was, like, twenty-four hours--and he said, "Dean Rusk. He's a doctor, isn't he?" The thing is none of us had ever heard of Dean Rusk before. And so that Walter began to check around, and, of course, every place he checked, everybody in that crowd always supports the guy, so he came up with nothing but accolades. So Walter acceded to it.

HACKMAN: How about, was he pushing the idea of Stevenson for secretary of state at that point?

CONWAY: Yeah, I think he was, come to think of it. Yes, that was his candidate. I had forgotten about that. Very late in the game the question of the attorney general came up. I was talked to quite a bit about this as to whether or not Bob Kennedy would go down as the attorney general or whether it would be just too much for people to keep on their stomach. I was kind of apprehensive about it, but I felt that it was worth the gamble. In retrospect, I question it. But at the time, I thought it made political sense. So I probably softened Walter up on this, worked it around so that he was prepared to endorse him. I say "in retrospect" because at this day and age I have become very much concerned about the politicization of the Justice Department and the fact that the chief cop is the political hatchetman and that the public prosecutor is in fact in bed with the people that he should be prosecuting. And so there's a whole series of questions that I now have about this that, you know, really didn't measure as high at that particular point in time. I do feel that Bob Kennedy became a very good attorney general and he worked at it and he was clean. But, in a sense, the principle was established with Bobby's

appointment and the [John N.] Mitchell appointment. The whole idea that the attorney general can be the president's lawyer, I find repulsive now. Now, Bob wasn't the president's lawyer but he was the president's brother, you know. I found in the years that I was in the government that this relationship was very threatening to people, the fact that if there was a disagreement with the attorney general, there was apprehension and fear about taking the problem to the president. And so Bob's power as attorney general was disproportionate. It's worrisome in retrospect.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Any other appointments that you or the UAW were particularly interested in?

CONWAY: Well, I was, of course, being besieged by fellows I'd worked with to become a part of the administration. I refused to consider it until after I'd had a chance to sort my own thinking out. I'd almost reached the point of no return as far as staying with the UAW. I'd concluded that, you know, I was ready for something else anyway. But I wasn't sure working for the government was what I was interested in because I'm not a government bureaucrat type. So I just kept saying, "Look, let's just talk about all these other things and forget about me. I'll come down over the Christmas holidays and take a vacation, and on personal time I'll think through what I want to do." So that's what I did. And it wasn't until right after Christmas and before New Year's that I got in my car with my son, who was then about fourteen years old, and we took a week off, drove to Washington and just puttered around and so on.

It was at this point that I began to talk with Dungan and others about what possible role I might play myself. I was really only interested in a kind of an extension at the political side of the activities there. So I began to think about what kind of a base I might be able to operate from within the administration. I was offered a couple of ambassadorships which I turned down, didn't want, wasn't interested. And finally when the decision was made to have [Robert C.] Bob Weaver serve as the Housing and Home Finance Agency administrator, I concluded for two reasons that what I would like to do would be to go into that setup as the deputy administrator. He was the highest ranking black in the administration and I figured he was going to need some strong backup because he'd be vulnerable. The other thing is that I concluded from my own experience that that probably was the place that I would have the greatest freedom to operate in the urban setting around the country. So I took that position.

My actual going to Washington was delayed because, if you recall, Bob Weaver became the target of the southern senators and his confirmation was delayed until about the fourteenth of March. And so I went in about a week after that. I think I was sworn in the twenty-first of March, something like that.

Then I worked my ass off for twelve hours a day, seven days a week for three or four months, getting on top of the job. During that time, I spent a great deal of time in touch with all of the key White House staff, the O'Donnells and the Dungans and the whole crew that was on the White House staff.

We began to put together, in the early months, a strategy on civil rights. The president had said that he wanted to have the strongest possible executive thrust in this area because it wasn't possible to get through the Congress any legislation. And so he formed the sub-Cabinet committee on whatever it was called--civil rights. Harris Wofford and these other guys got involved. I worked very closely with John Feild on the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity Employment. Lyndon Johnson's guy was Hobart Taylor . . .

HACKMAN: Right.

CONWAY: . . . a black from Michigan who was a friend of mine. I worked with Berl Bernhard and the whole crew of guys to try to get things moving along. I had very good credentials as an individual with the blacks in the administration. There were a number of key blacks that came in from Michigan that came in one department or another. [Louis E.] Louie Martin and I worked very closely together. This was all quite informal, in and out of the White House, and some of it at the National Democratic Committee offices; they were just down the street from my office. There was just a block separating the HHFA [Housing and Home Finance Agency] office and the Rudell Building where the DNC [Democratic National Committee] was, so a simple phone call and I could drop down and do all sorts of things there. So that's essentially the way I operated. We put together the . . . Well, the first legislation passed was S-1, the area redevelopment bill. That had been designed originally by us in Detroit, sponsored by Pat McNamara, and it became a piece of legislation that had become symbolic. So the president pushed it through with the West Virginia overtones. But it didn't have much in it, it was a pretty shallow piece of legislation. We put together, the first major domestic legislation which was the Omnibus Housing Act of '61.

HACKMAN: That had been basically drafted by the time you got there though, or were you at all involved?

CONWAY: Yes. Well, it was being worked on. Hortense Gable was working with Bob Weaver outside on the drafting of the legislation and she used my office until I came in. So I would say that about two-thirds of the work was done on the legislation before I actually came on board. [Milton P.] Milt Semer was kind of the general manager of the drafting process.

HACKMAN: Were you actually working there before the appointment cleared, then? Because I'm thinking the message was on, like, February something and the legislation was passed very early.

CONWAY: The legislation was passed in June.

HACKMAN: Yeah, it was sent to Congress on March 9, I have.

CONWAY: Yeah. No, Weaver had prepared the message and the president had sent it to the Hill before he was confirmed. The actual legislation was not sent up until about the first of April.

It was called the Omnibus Housing Act of '61 and it was a massive expansion of many of the programs that we had: the Community Facilities Act, the urban renewals. And in terms of its significance at that point in time, it was a major shift in direction, emphasis. But in retrospect it wasn't proposing much.

HACKMAN: Before we go into detail on the legislation, let me just hit you again with a couple of things. Can you remember, generally, on appointments, yourself or Walter Reuther being concerned that John Kennedy was paying too much attention to Meany's preferences as opposed to people that the UAW was putting forward?

CONWAY: Well, the only case of that kind that, you know, hit our consciousness was me. McNamara attempted to convince the president that I should become the assistant secretary of defense for manpower. And without ever consulting me, he went to the president and the president said, "You'll have to clear it with George Meany because this really has kind of been a traditional position that the labor unions have been interested in." So McNamara went over and talked to Meany and got, you know just the roughest treatment. This all was conveyed to me afterwards. I had no interest in the Defense Department anyway. I had no military experience and all of my attitudes were the opposite of what anybody would want, so they never really consulted with me on that. There was that incident.

But apart from that, I don't think there was any serious concern in that early period. You know, it's a huge expansionist kind of thing. While Walter had some concern about State Department appointments that I wasn't particularly interested in, he was more concerned about, you know, he wanted to be a part of the administration himself and he really wanted to be, you know, like an honorary something or other to the United Nations and so on, and Meany blocked that. So that was building up between Walter and Meany and Jack Kennedy. I had been the subject of it in the very beginning. Walter was the subject of it during the time I was in the government. I again became the subject of it when Arthur Goldberg went to the courts . . .

HACKMAN: Right.

CONWAY: . . . and Meany threw a rage when Kennedy considered me for the under secretaryship of labor. But I just made a note of that. But other than that I don't think there was any, nothing that I was particularly conscious of.

HACKMAN: Yeah. When you first went to talk to Weaver about the job, can you remember his own, well, any conversation about how he wanted to operate and what role you would play within that, or was that . . .

CONWAY: No, I never talked to Weaver about it. I never talked to Weaver until after he was confirmed and the day before I went to work. Now, it was understood that he'd agreed to my appointment. We'd known each other way back and we knew each other by reputation. Our

method of operation we worked out as we. . . . I called him up the day before I came to work and I said, "What time do you come to work?" He said, "I'm usually home by twenty minutes after nine." And I said, "Well, I'll get there at 9:30." So that was our hours, he started at twenty minutes after nine and I started at 9:30. And we just kind of hung to that. That fitted my pattern. We just started off. We compared notes, philosophy and we found we were still good easy touchpoints. We'd just worked interchangeably, so that when he was gone I ran the place, when I was not there he did what I did. But there was a clear understanding that all of the politics I handled. He accepted that, there was never any problem on it at all.

HACKMAN: Why? Because of experience or simply because of the racial issue or both or . . .

CONWAY: Oh, I think mostly I was recognized as being an intensely political guy and that I could probably be more effective at that. It was quickly accepted that I had that function. I did all the personnel stuff in the agency, all of the shifting and changing and, you know, everything that needed to be done.

HACKMAN: In your discussions with Dungan or O'Donnell or whoever on appointments, had you gotten involved in the other HHFA appointments? Marie McGuire? Or [William L.] Slayton? Or all these people? [Sidney H.] Sid Woolner?

CONWAY: Slayton, yeah. We talked about Slayton at some length. There was a lot of question about Slayton as to whether he was heavy enough for the job and also whether he was too much of a developer's man. Neal Hardy. Marie McGuire was selected much later, and I did have some say about it. I didn't know her that well.

HACKMAN: Here's a list of people if you need any names.

CONWAY: She was kind of compromise in the. . . .

HACKMAN: Was she . . .

CONWAY: Mostly what I did was to work on the regional office appointments and the FHA [Federal Housing Administration] commissioners and that whole scene.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Was Marie McGuire through Lyndon Johnson at all? Or was she strictly a Weaver choice, finally, on the basis of experience or . . .

CONWAY: It was a concession to Lyndon Johnson, but she really kind of served both purposes. She was a well-recognized woman in the public housing field. And since Weaver knew this field himself, he felt quite comfortable with her there.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

CONWAY: She turned out to be a very loyal and very hard working gal.

HACKMAN: Any resistance initially to taking Sid Woolner from Michigan?

CONWAY: That happened before I got there. Sid and I got along very well. I was his protector, as a matter of fact. Soon as I left, they got rid of him. He went back up on the Hill. Sid is a strange kind of a guy. He is a hard worker. He can be very effective. But he has a kind of a sourlooking face and a personality that seems to go with it. So he turns people off, quite unintentional. But I had no trouble with him at all, got along very well.

HACKMAN: Okay. The other one, I guess, well, Milt Semer.

CONWAY: Semer was, of course, the guy with the Hill knowledge, having been on the staff of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, and he brought to it a special talent. The one that was probably the most controversial was Hugh Miels, who came in from the League of Cities. I didn't know Hugh. I knew John Gunther very well, and he was from the opposite of the two associations. Hugh got in trouble because he served two clients. He served the outside as well as he served the agency. At a certain point, it became clear that he really hadn't gotten his loyalties straightened out and the best thing for him was to go back to that world. And so we worked it out and he left.

The most significant thing that happened, I think, in that period is that our legislation, since it was the lead domestic legislation (dis-counting the S-1), was the piece of legislation around which the [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien congressional liaison operation was perfected. We met from about the first of April until the legislation was finally passed every week in the Fish Room. We would review the progress on this and other pieces of legislation. Around this major exercise, I think, perfected the whole Larry O'Brien operation. This is where [Richard K.] Dick Donahue and [Charles U.] Chuck Daly and . . .

HACKMAN: [Claude] Desautels and [Mike N.] Manatos? Well, maybe one of those guys was later.

CONWAY: Well, I was thinking of Henry Wilson.

HACKMAN: Henry Wilson.

CONWAY: Yeah. And it became a very effective team. Desautels was kind of the backup man and the notifier and the recordkeeper. Mike was a one-man show in the Senate. Since most of our problems were in the House at that particular time, that's where the concentration was and that's where the manpower was needed. But just like the sub-Cabinet committee on civil rights, you know, worked on a fairly continuous basis, the congressional liaison responsibility was organized in much the same way, and clear lines of communication.

And that one had much more staying power, of course, because it was kind of the bread and butter of the administration, produced the results or the failures. So it got a great deal more attention.

HACKMAN: Can you remember mistakes that first time around on that piece of legislation?

CONWAY: No, it was pretty well done. We might have made some mistakes later on when we took the department bill up the first time, because we drew the lines too sharply. But we figured that it was--we figured not necessarily the White House--better to lose and get a decent piece of legislation. I mean, rather than get an ineffective piece of legislation like the HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] Department set up, we wanted to be able to have some power to reorganize and to do things that a secretary should do. We couldn't do this if we compromised with the southerners and the interests too much. So we preferred to go down rather than to. . . . And it turned out to be much. . . . You know, it was only a year's lost time.

HACKMAN: Yeah. On the Omnibus Bill in '61, can you remember, first of all, differences within the agency in putting that legislation together, what goes in or what stays out, or working with the Hill staff ahead of time on what goes in and what stays out?

CONWAY: Well, the thing that we had to protect to keep Senator [John J.] Sparkman and Claude Rains with us was the separateness of FHA. As long as we kept the FHA commissioner out from under the authority of the administrator they were prepared to support the water and sewage and the urban renewal and these other. We introduced the mass transit and the open space and a number of important new projects at the time. But, you know, we never did get control of the FHA during the time that I was there, and I'm not sure anybody has control of it yet. It's a pretty bad agency.

HACKMAN: But were there any other ways, were there any ways you could do that? I guess there really isn't any way you can do that without the people on the Hill who are concerned knowing what's being done, but are there any alternatives?

CONWAY: Well, our big problem was that not only were we trapped with two Alabamans in charge of our legislation, but we were trapped with Albert Thomas sitting as chairman of the appropriations subcommittee, and he was a pretty ruthless, but hard-working old guy. He ran the show from up there by, in effect, punishing and rewarding. And the first year, through the appropriations process, he insisted on handling each of the separate parts individually. The second time around, in 1962, I became the first official of HHFA who ever participated in every piece of the appropriations process as it affected the whole agency. Even Weaver hadn't done that, but I

insisted and Albert Thomas acceded. I participated in the Fanny May [Federal National Mortgage Association] and the FHA appropriations hearings and arguments as well as all the others.

But two other things that we did was to. . . . We then put together our roadshow, the regional White House conference idea, you know, to carry to the country what the administration had done in that first year. That became the beginnings of a team of people that were organized to work on the 1962 elections, a whole group of guys from the domestic agencies--Department of Labor, Department of Commerce, HHFA, SBA [Small Business Administration], and others. They were thinking about, you know, the election in 1962. The other thing we did, of course, was to join forces--I did--with the AFL-CIO on an accelerated public works bill.

HACKMAN: Right, yeah.

CONWAY: And I fought inside with the Bureau of the Budget and others to get the sights raised on this, and I guess it came out a billion-dollar bill.

HACKMAN: Nine hundred million, yeah.

CONWAY: The AFL-CIO had proposed a two billion dollar program, and we sawed off on a billion and got nine hundred and some million, half of which was administered by HHFA, the accelerated public works. Sid Woolner and I ran that show. It was a pretty effective program for getting us out into the cities and dealing with the public officials. And we built very strong relationships with the Conference of Mayors and the county officials and others, which was a part of the political side of the administration.

HACKMAN: Do you remember where the idea for the accelerated public works program came from? You said you joined forces with the AFL-CIO, but was it Council of Economic Advisers or the AFL . . .

CONWAY: No, no, no, no. It was a memorandum prepared by Nat Goldfinger for George Meany. George Meany sent it to the president, the president sent it to the Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers, and they, then, began to respond. So this was clearly a case of the administration responding to a suggestion of the labor unions. It was at this point that the decision was made to develop the concept of a shelf of public works projects, lead time, developing some measure of labor-intensive projects and so on. So that's all been, that was all done then. The Council of Economic Advisers did a very good job on this. They began to deal with these concepts of structural unemployment versus, you know, the regular . . .

HACKMAN: Demand.

CONWAY: . . . demand unemployment. This was the forerunner to the thinking that went into the poverty program. So there were early signs of that kind of activity. [Charles L.] Charlie Schultze was a deputy director of the Bureau of the Budget and picked that whole theme up and did extremely effective work in developing it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember, in putting together the legislation that was sent up to the Hill, working out what areas would be covered? For a while, I believe there was a difference on whether you'd just cover what were classified as depressed areas or whether you'd cover labor surplus areas, which would then take in Cleveland and a couple of other cities. Did you get involved in that?

CONWAY: On the definitions, yeah. We had great difficulty with the ARA [Area Redevelopment Administration] legislation. And it was the deficiencies of the ARA legislation that we were attempting to correct in the accelerated public works.

HACKMAN: Right, right, yeah.

CONWAY: So we were able to use the trigger mechanisms, the measuring devices, more flexibly with the accelerated public works legislation. Big problem that we had was how do you put these things out to bid and protect against the contractor firm that has the equipment and the men who dig the ditch with two people, when we really wanted to provide employment for twenty-five. It was that kind of thing that was much more difficult to develop measurements on than where the unemployment was. That was fairly clear by then. So anyway, the excitement of that first year and the buildup through the White House conferences and the preparations for the '62 elections where we were going to obviously improve our ability to deal with Congress. . . . We had a hundred and sixty-four what we called hard-core votes that we could count on, and we had to on every major piece of legislation put together the difference between that and two hundred and eighteen, and it was very difficult. We were still suffering from the effects of the filibuster in the Senate, but our biggest problem was cracking that House. So we concentrated on House races and trying to figure out how we could improve that picture.

HACKMAN: Can you talk about the organizational or the administrative strategy on the way decisions were made on giving out money under accelerated public works, the feed into the regional office and then up the line, and how politics entered into the president getting credit for the decision and this kind of thing? Is this something you had in mind far ahead of time, as far as the working process would work?

CONWAY: Well, two things that I have as a rule of thumb: one was that we would maintain control of the process ourselves, which we did, in the Washington office of the CFA [Community Facilities Administration], in my office; and that we would deal directly with the communities. We would not allocate blocks of money to the regional office and yield the responsibility to the regional directors for the decision-making on the projects.

I've been always concerned about the way the federal government operates its grant-in-aid programs. They set the guidelines up and they put the money in the pipeline and then go through a process of selective administration where the lack of funds is the excuse for not giving certain communities projects and so on. So we dealt with the whole thing centrally, administered it centrally, and committed all the money. And I was convinced that it could be done in a period of three to four months, and we did it.

When I went into OEO to get that thing set up, I already had had the experience of doing this in HHFA so I felt perfectly confident to take a community action program and put it in place in a ninety-day period if that's what the administration wanted to do.

HACKMAN: Yeah. How much of a problem was it in getting the people at the regional offices who were used to responding to political pressures in those regions to allow the thing to move on up the line and for the decision to be made at a higher level? Was that a problem at all?

CONWAY: No, it wasn't a problem because they didn't have control of the program. You don't have that kind of a problem unless you start off that way.

HACKMAN: Yeah. How does the White House get involved in the decisions among communities who are seeking these grants? Who gets in on the meetings?

CONWAY: Well, we didn't handle it out of the White House, we handled it out of our own office. The White House interests would be made clear in the sense of, you know, their concern about unemployment in a particular community and what could be done about it and so on. But most of the negotiations were handled directly by the staff that we pulled together on it: Sid Woolner, me. There was actually more interest expressed on the political side from the Democratic National Committee offices than from the White House. That's why I think that they're almost indistinguishable. You can do things out of the party headquarters with much more freedom than you can out of the White House, so that [Richard] Dick Maguire and Ken O'Donnell and others would be operating out of the party headquarters part of the time and part of the time out of the White House.

HACKMAN: Could you tie specific decisions to specific legislation that was on the Hill at that point, in terms of a certain community and a certain . . .

CONWAY: The awards for votes?

HACKMAN: Yeah, right.

CONWAY: Oh, sure. Sure, you hold back until a congressman says, "What the hell's happened to my project?" and you say, "What the hell's happened to your commitment on this piece of legislation?" Oh, yeah. What I'm really saying is that's when the congressional liaison thing was perfected on our original legislation. It became. . . . I'll never forget the final break on how we picked up the last seven or eight votes that we needed on the legislation in June. The saving and loan associations were notoriously tied into the Republicans and to Nixon, especially in the California savings and loan group and also the Chicago group. So we put into the legislation a particularly stiff section, I forget the details of it now, that adversely affected the savings and loan associations as against the commercial banks. They expressed great concern and they worked awfully hard to get us to knock that out. There was no quid pro except that eventually we picked up about ten votes when we made the concession. And the concession was made in the White House and the negotiation was handled by Dick Donahue. So that it's kind of a legalized extortion.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Any problems within HHFA in getting the career people to understand what was going on and to accept what was going on in something like that?

CONWAY: The sort-out process wasn't too difficult. The genuinely political Republicans preferred to go some place else, up on the Hill or to the interests. The dedicated civil servants that had been underground for the full Eisenhower years came back into the sunlight. The big problem was just sorting out the incompetents from the competents. Political loyalty is no substitute for competence, and so the big problem was always a question of being able to free up enough key spots to be able to put competent people in to take charge and direct the affairs of others. By and large, we were able to put together an effective team in a period of about six months. Now, when you get to the insuring offices, the FHA regional offices, the district offices, there our ability to influence was a much more laborious process. It was a question of having to master the techniques of transfer and, you know, promotion, manipulating the Civil Service selective system and so on.

HACKMAN: Does this include the appointment of state officers?

CONWAY: Yeah, they were covered by the Civil Service. That was one of the things the Republicans did, they moved the Democrats out and put their own people in and then covered them.

HACKMAN: Covered them, yeah.

CONWAY: So it made it much more difficult to change that. Plus the fact that that's where the powers of the administrator were very minimal because the political control on the Hill insisted, in effect, that the FHA commissioner was independent. So what we did is work with Neal Hardy and his colleagues to accomplish

these things rationally, systematically. If you could free a vacancy, then you'd run into the local political interests--the guy that would be advanced by the political people at the local level who would just serve another set of interests. So there was always the screening process to make sure you didn't get the wrong people.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any particularly difficult efforts at getting the regional . . .

CONWAY: Oh, yeah. The toughest one probably, the one we laughed at so much, was in Philadelphia. The guy that was pushed by Billy Green was a guy who had been a state senator and had been tainted with graft. Senator [Joseph S.] Clark was absolutely opposed to this guy. It was a question of a Green versus a Clark political struggle. On this particular one, there was a lot riding on it, and Ken O'Donnell kept coming back to me and back to me. So I said to him, "Well, it doesn't mean that much to me. I think this guy is the wrong guy, but we've got a regional office there that will probably keep an eye on it. And so, I'll go ahead." So I called Clark up, Senator Clark up and I said, "I'm going to go ahead with this appointment." And he just blew his stack and screamed and ranted and threatened to go to the press and all that sort of stuff. So I said, "Go ahead. You know, what are you going to do, hurt me? You know, I'm making the decision so you'll have to single me out, but go ahead." Well, he did, actually, but it didn't create much of a ripple. We had a few others like that, but by and large I was able to reason through, convince people not to do this or to do something that they didn't want to see happen. But there would be a few of these intractable political situations where you'd finally have to go with one or the other.

HACKMAN: On the accelerated public works, can you remember why the secretary of commerce was designated to, I think it was, expedite and coordinate the program? That's at least the way the legislation read, I think.

CONWAY: Yeah. Well, the secretary of commerce was in a sense the superior Cabinet official that was most directly affected. That was part of the problem that Weaver had, his being a non-Cabinet member. You can only coordinate among peers. Later on, [R. Sargent, Jr.] Shriver had the same problem when he was designated to coordinate the OEO thing with Cabinet officials. Actually, what happened is that the secretary of commerce designated [William L.] Bill Batt. Bill Batt and I had worked on a whole series of things under the ARA and so we had no trouble at all on our part of it.

HACKMAN: In the ARA, I know a lot of people were dissatisfied at the start it got off to, but was your feeling that that was Batt's failure on the program or just the circumstances, or what accounts for that?

CONWAY: Well, it was a very thin piece of legislation and it had

been compromised in the legislative process. In other words, there wasn't a great deal of money there . . .

HACKMAN: The backdoor financing thing.

CONWAY: . . . and a lot of things--yeah--had occurred there that made it a weaker piece of legislation to administer. What happened was that there was a greater show of activity than there was activity. It was the beginning of a strong planning process effort. I was interested in it from the HHFA thing because we had 701 planning grants, and what we were trying to do was to strengthen the hand of governors and state planning agencies and multiple political jurisdiction agencies, either informal or formal, and to encourage movement in this direction--metropolitan area planning. Well, twelve years later, we're still working at that, but there's been a great deal of progress made. The ARA effort was really just like the first one. It was a new thing.

I think Batt made a mistake when he yielded to the Agriculture Department and gave away his powers to [John A.] Baker and these other guys. They simply turned it over to the standard Agriculture Department employees. It became very clear that in order to be successful in any place in the South, you had to be white. So we ran into, in the civil rights area, absolute, rigid Agriculture Department resistance. We took these two polls of the minority employment in the federal government. The Agriculture Department had .3 percent minority employment in the first poll. It was the only agency of government that, after a strenuous effort, lost ground. In the second poll they had .2 percent. Orville Freeman was never able to do anything with that and didn't really understand why, I guess. And that was, I think, the greatest failure of Bill Batt's. But he was trying to get visibility. There were other areas of the country where you didn't have a racial problem where he was able to do some good things; in Appalachia and in the Iron [Mountain] range and places like that.

The other two things, of significance, I think, that occurred during those years, as far as I was concerned and the president and the attorney general, was the stroke of the pen that never was taken. You know, it took a long time to work at. And this was a disillusioning thing for me. I really came to the conclusion that Jack Kennedy was afraid of this, that he wasn't as much for it as his speeches had indicated in the campaign. He kept saying that it's a complicated legal problem that has to be cleared through the Justice Department to produce. We finally got our drafts to the point where [Norbert A.] Norb Schlei was assigned to finalize it. And it finally came down to, the last long delay was over the question of covering the saving and loan associations. We were advised that the powers of the president didn't extend to that. We said we thought it did.

We, then, finally came up with a strategy that would permit savings and loans to be covered, because there was a vacancy on the board that the president could fill with somebody that was committed to do this; this would give us the majority. The board could adopt a policy that the president could then lock in. And the decision was made, I'm sure by the president, not to do it. We lost that battle. And the result was that the stroke of the pen got us prospectively into the desegregation bit. We really put the best face on it we could, but it wasn't a very good face. It was very upsetting to me. Weaver was not as upset as I was, surprisingly enough, because he knew in his own mind and his own feelings, I guess, how complicated this thing was going to be under any circumstances. But that happened, I forget the date when it came out, but it was a long time in coming.

HACKMAN: Yeah, it was November '62 I think, late November or early December. But was there ever a point earlier when you were nearly at the point where you had the necessary support either from the White House or Justice to get it together?

CONWAY: Yeah, I'd say that . . .

HACKMAN: Late '61?

CONWAY: Yeah. Sometime in the fall of '61 we were very close we thought. And then we got lost, something happened and things disappeared in the woodwork. It took us quite a while to get it back out again. I don't know just exactly what happened.

HACKMAN: You don't remember--I don't know whether this'll bring back anything--it ever being put to you and Weaver that there was a choice between the Executive order now or sending up a departmental bill? Does that make any kind of sense?

CONWAY: No. No, I don't think that was. . . . It might have been put to Weaver but it was never put to me.

HACKMAN: Yeah, okay.

CONWAY: That may have been in somebody's mind but it wasn't conscious. The other thing that I did was extra HHFA. I went to Yugoslavia on a United Nations thing, representing the United States in a Housing and Economic Development discussion. I spent a considerable amount of time with the Yugoslav trade union leaders. This was still in the cold war period. When I came back from that trip, I went in and spent two or three hours with Bob Kennedy and just pointed out my reactions to the Yugoslavs, to the Yugoslav trade unionists, to our American stance in Yugoslav trade unionists, to our American stance in Yugoslavia, our cold war stance, our lack of

communication. And I urged reconsideration of the way we were handling our relations with Yugoslavia, that it was clearly a country that was prepared to open relations and so on, and that it was the proper thing to do. He arranged for a series of debriefing sessions with people in the State Department, and I had a pretty cold reception. But the Bay of Pigs came along, I forget just exactly when it was . . .

HACKMAN: I think it was March or April of '61.

CONWAY: Yeah, earlier than that. The Bay of Pigs came along, and the president got in a hell of a jam. He didn't know what to do after the debacle. So I was called in on that and asked if it would be possible to get Walter Reuther and Mrs. Roosevelt and some other people together to form a private committee to try to buy the prisoners back. And so we put that together, and Walter worked pretty hard on it and got Victor Reuther involved, [Duane P.] Pat Greathouse, Mrs. Roosevelt, Milton Eisenhower and a couple of others. And there's a lot of energy and activity that went in on that. Bob was quite involved in that. The president himself was, of course, deeply embarrassed by this whole thing. So that there was a lot of contact around that, up to the point where finally we sent Pat Greathouse to Cuba to talk with [Fidel] Castro, you know, and Castro kept upping the price and so we finally backed out and closed the whole thing up. But the effort was made, and it gave the president some breathing time.

HACKMAN: Yeah. You mentioned earlier the development of Reuther's relationship with John Kennedy during the administration. What did you have in mind particularly?

CONWAY: Walter found Jack Kennedy an intellectual delight and built a whole new kind of relationship with him, where he would come to Washington, having spent two or three months trying to figure out some things that he wanted the president to consider. I usually was the person that Walter would call to arrange to set the meeting up and so on, and so I would get it set up. Usually it would take place 5:30, 6:00, 6:30 at night so they could sit and talk for two or three hours. And Walter would come in with memoranda and charts and all kinds of things. So he was, in effect, giving the benefit of his experience and wisdom to this young man who happened to be president; it was that kind of a That's why I made reference to this generation gap thing that Mrs. Kennedy had pointed out. And they were very good sessions, I'm sure, because Walter was a good teacher and a good analyst and so on. But there were many, many times when I had the feeling that the president was indulging Walter, that this was a way of, you know, being decent and also keeping good relations and so on.

These became sessions in which Walter eventually began to peel off his frustrations on George Meany and the AFL-CIO and why things weren't going right and so on. The president listened and was very friendly and very sympathetic. He would say, in effect, "You're right, and I don't see how you can stand this; but it's important to keep things together." So he would always work in the direction of trying to keep some stability. Walter would go away from the meetings feeling better and having, in a sense, made a promise to delay bringing the thing to some kind of a head. The relationship was deteriorating all the time between Meany and Reuther while I was in the government, so that I was conscious of this happening. The other thing that occurred that. . . .

Of course, with the Bay of Pigs the president appointed Bob Kennedy and Sorensen and [Maxwell D.] Max Taylor, I guess, his committee to look into this . . .

HACKMAN: Arleigh Burke was on there too.

CONWAY: CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. Then Bob at a later time went to South America and Japan and Indonesia on that trip. About six months after that, I was asked if I would become a part of a team of three people to evaluate four countries and what the United States' posture was in these countries, both public and private. The other two guys were from foundations and I was from the government. We worked with this young [Lucius C.] Battle.

HACKMAN: Luke Battle.

CONWAY: Luke Battle, yeah. It was his money that was used to pay the cost of this. It was all designed to be a follow-up trip, to go to some of the same countries that Bob had gone to and to evaluate what had happened since his trip. The four countries chosen were Pakistan, Ethiopia, Ecuador, and Indonesia. The guy who went to Pakistan came back with his report and the guy who went to Ethiopia, same thing. I covered the other two countries. In our consolidated report, we were expressing very grave concern about the overindulgence of the United States foreign policy and its corrupting effect and the over-reliance on the military and so on. And in every instance we predicted, you know, that there was going to be some kind of eruption. In my particular . . . [Interruption]

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE I

But we filed reports on those. I predicted a coup in Ecuador and it happened about a month later. I also covered the intense build-up of hostility in Indonesia and my belief that there would be a blood bath there. The only one that was delayed. . . . There was a coup in Ethiopia where his son tried to take over from Haile Selassie. And, of course,

the Pakistanian thing was propped up by the United States for another eight or ten years.

But there was considerable discussion with Bob after that trip, you know, just conveying to him my reactions to that whole experience. And it was in this connection that I really discovered the fear about Bob and the fact that as the president's brother he really presented a problem. These were State Department people, CIA people, and people who thought of themselves in the normal reporting line directly to the president in his international responsibilities. I did not really discover this on the domestic side to the extent that it was present there, and I can understand why. But that began to give me second thoughts about this whole relationship.

The other thing that occurred was a confrontation between Bob and Lyndon Johnson in connection with the president's Committee on Equal Employment. Lyndon Johnson was the responsible head of the committee. John Feild had left as the staff director and Hobart Taylor was acting as the staff director. They were selling the program out at a pretty rapid rate, going over to the Plans for Progress pacts and so on.

HACKMAN: Right.

CONWAY: And I was in a session one day, representing HHFA, when Bob came into the meeting. The vice president was chairing the meeting. Within a matter of three or four minutes the vice president found himself on the defensive because Bob just tore into this whole Plans for Progress thing and asked for facts and statistics and so on. He used [James E.] Webb and the NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] as the example. It was a pretty brutal business, very sharp. It brought tensions between Johnson and Kennedy right out on the table and very hard. Everybody was sweating under the armpits and so on.

And then, finally, after completely humiliating Webb and making the vice president look like a fraud and shutting Hobart Taylor up completely, he got up. He walked around the table, started out, but instead of leaving he came directly over to me and shook my hand and stood there and talked to me for about thirty seconds about how things were going here, there, and every place, and then he went on out. And that made a hell of an imprint on a lot of people who were in that room, and it made a special imprint on the vice president. All this did was to confirm in his mind everything that he had suspected and all that sort of stuff. So it clearly affected my relationships with Lyndon Johnson for ever on after that. Not that it changed anything, because it didn't, but it was a fairly significant event.

The other thing that happened that affected our relationships

was Walter and Victor Reuther's progressive concern about the deterioration that was taking place in Italy and the futility of the policy that was being followed by the United States in dealing with the Catholic and conservative parties, and the need to have an opening to the left. Walter had had the opportunity of spending some time with the old Italian Socialist leader--whose name escapes me at the moment, it'll come to mind in a minute--and was convinced that it was possible to put together the non-communist left with the middle of the road, but that everything that was being run out of our State Department embassy was to the contrary. So Walter wanted to make this case. So I called Bob and set up a meeting at Hickory Hill in which Walter and Victor and I went out to sit down with Bob. And he and Arthur Goldberg there, secretary of labor. We talked at this at considerable length, and Bob was impressed and said that what he would do was to set up a meeting of the National Security Council and we could just simply make the case there; that he was a member of the Security Council and had a right to do this, would be happy to do this; and that Arthur, since he also had the same prerogative, should, would be there too. So that's that way it was left.

So a meeting was set up with Maxwell Taylor and the Security Council, and we went in and met and spent a very productive day with them. Arthur Goldberg didn't show up. There was a change in policy. There was not only a change in policy but the actual opening to the left did occur, the coalition government formed and did. . . . But Meany was advised of all of this and blew his stack. The whole thing was leaked to [Victor] Vic Riesel and printed at some length in the Riesel column.

This kind of culminated when the vacancy came and Arthur went to the Supreme Court, and Reuther tried to get Jack Kennedy to appoint me as the under secretary. Kennedy indicated he was prepared to do that. It all blew up, and I forget exactly when that happened. But by this time I was completely losing interest in the government. The Cuban missile crisis had changed everything as far as the election was concerned, everything was called off. So I could see that, in a sense, the bloom was off and that things were going to be much more mundane and so on. So I began to change my direction.

In March, I left the administration, decided to go back to the labor movement. I was going to get caught in the crossfire anyway for as long as I was there and there wasn't much sense in continuing that. So Walter asked me if I would take on the directorship of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO and I agreed to do it. And I left, I guess, on about the seventh of March, 1963. I went out. And there were no problems. When that picture was taken there, Kennedy was saying that he was convinced that [Barry M.] Goldwater was going to be the nominee and he felt that he could defeat him decisively, and he was kind of looking forward to it. There was kind of an understanding that the frustrations were building and that something had to happen to change the circumstances. And so that's when I left the administration.

I wasn't out more than three or four weeks when Bobby Kennedy called me back and said, "We've got a massive problem in Montgomery, Alabama. Martin Luther King is in jail and he's conducting himself in a way where there are literally hundreds of people going to jail. Can you help out?" And so I got involved in trying to help out. I ended up raising a hundred and sixty thousand dollars in bail money which, I gather, is still there after all these years. That's another story, that's the beginning of another chapter, that and the civil rights march and the whole civil rights legislation and so on.

HACKMAN: How much contact did you have with Robert Kennedy on this? Well, what's the best way to do it? Since we've only got, well, twenty-five minutes left, and I would like to come back at some time and develop a few additional questions on housing and I know there'll be more on '68. Maybe I could get you just to carry forward from that point your relationship with Robert Kennedy, not really in a summary but giving me a good guideline on what to do next time. We talked a little bit about that over the phone, but. . . .

CONWAY: Yeah. Well, the next intensive period with Robert Kennedy and the administration--not so much Jack personally--was on the civil rights thing as it was building up, the march on Washington. I served as the Washington representative of the UAW and the IUD [Industrial Union Department] on the march and I served as Walter's stand-in on the national committee on all of those preparations. I got thrown in pretty strongly with Bob and the Justice Department on how that could and should be handled.

And, of course, the success of the march led to the demands that were placed on the president. And again, Walter Reuther emerged as the spokesman because of his experience. The meeting with the president led to, in a sense, the insistence that he take the leadership and send legislation to the Congress. He was very reluctant to do so, but he agreed to do it, and only when Walter, on behalf of the Committee of 10, said, "It's your obligation as the president to send the legislation up. And if you do that, it's our obligation as leaders of our

organizations to get the legislation passed. But this is a moral issue now and it's got to be faced that way." So the president agreed to send the legislation up. And then what happened is that we ended up then with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights taking the responsibility for coordination and the development of the legislation. The negotiations with the Justice Department, Bob Kennedy and Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and others, was carried on by [Joseph L., Jr.] Joe Rauh and me largely, and Clarence Mitchell.

We had a hell of a time getting Katzenbach, in particular, to agree to do the things that. . . . He was compromising the legislation before it was sent up and what we were trying to do was to convince the president and the attorney general that they had to send up uncompromised legislation, and if it were necessary to compromise, it should be compromised legislation, and if it were necessary to compromise. It should be compromised in the legislative process. And it got pretty bitter with Katzenbach, in particular.

Joe Rauh and Clarence Mitchell and I were the hammers and [Andrew J.] Andy Biemiller and [James] Jim Hamilton were the other members of the five-man steering committee. They were much softer because they didn't have the same commitment. But we worked as a team, we did finally hammer out the legislation. We had to expose some of Katzenbach's maneuvers behind our backs with the heads of the committees in the Senate and the House. We were in that kind of fairly extended kind of negotiations and legislative activity at the point that the president came to the AFL-CIO convention to speak to the convention. That was the last time I saw him. He, of course, got assassinated just four or five days later.

HACKMAN: On Katzenbach's operations, this is primarily things that he was doing with [Emanuel] Celler in the House, or is it . . .

CONWAY: Well, it was Celler and [William M.] McCulloch in the House.

HACKMAN: But Robert Kennedy and the president also, at a certain point at least, were very much involved in . . .

CONWAY: Well, it's like any of these things, that the guy that does the negotiation--in this case Katzenbach--is obviously not acting on his own. So our job was to hammer him and produce the refinements of the differences to the point where they could be resolved. That's essentially what we did. We just pounded away until we reduced the areas of difference. We finally got the legislation the way we felt it should be sent up. But Katzenbach would use the fact that Celler would say this or McCulloch would say that or, "I can't get [Everett M.] Dirksen to agree to this," and so on. And in a couple of instances we pulled the props out from under him by demonstrating conclusively that this was something that he was saying to them rather than them saying to him. What he was trying to do was to establish the water

level before the legislative process. Typical, nothing unusual about it. So that's the kind of thing that we were going through on a fairly extended basis, up to the point that the president was assassinated.

[Interruption]

HACKMAN: We were talking about Katzenbach and that legislation. Did you have continued contacts with Robert Kennedy then on this?

CONWAY: We met in his office a couple times during the period we were negotiating on the legislation. And I talked with him on the phone more frequently. But anyway, the thing is that it was all worked out finally and the legislation was sent up and we began the process of. . . .

The other thing I was working with him on was--Bobby--that he had developed a national service corps concept, which was the predecessor to VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America], and he had [William] Bill Anderson and a number of people were in working on this. And then [H.R.] Gross put his amendment successfully on the legislation and no federal moneys could be spent. Anderson was able to take care of himself but there were about five or six people who were on his staff that suddenly the rug was pulled out from under them. And so I was asked to see if I could do something about that. And so I found ways of burying on other people's payrolls the five or six guys, so that they could continue working on this. I did this for a period of time until they could find other employment.

So I would attend development sessions in the attorney general's office on this idea and others and so on. Sometimes I'd go, sometimes I'd send somebody else. But it was a very friendly and very positive relationship that I maintained through that whole period with Bob, even though we were, you know, back in the old stance of facing each other with not necessarily the same ideas.

HACKMAN: Yeah. We talked briefly about the spring of '64 and the vice presidential thing. Is there anything immediately after the assassination or around the time of the assassination that . . .

CONWAY: No, I think what happened there was that the scene shifted. As far as Bob was concerned, following the assassination, he was in a rather morose period. I didn't see very much of him during that time. Several things happened of significance in the spring. Bob dropped by UAW-GM[General Motors] council in Washington, which was his first public appearance. The response of the UAW guys was tremendous. We then invited him to come to the UAW convention that spring and accept, on behalf of his brother, what's called a solidarity award. He dropped in on the GM thing just as a kind of a practice, I think. That

happened very shortly before the convention. He did come to the convention. I met him at the airport and took him through the convention. He spoke and accepted the award, you know; it was kind of an emotional thing. And we took him back to the airport and he went right home.

Then I didn't really see much of him until the question of the vice presidency and the 1964 thing came up. Mostly I talked to Ken O'Donnell about that. We had one session in which we talked about Lyndon's attitude toward Bob and how the likelihood of his being even considered by Lyndon would be minimal. But Ken and I then worked out a strategy with Walter Reuther, and that was that we were going to take the position that as far as we were concerned, the vice president could be either of two people, Bob Kennedy or Hubert Humphrey. We began to build our fences around that and just kept nudging things in to the point where we were closing the president's options all the time, and he was trying to throw them open. And as you know, the president finally said no members of the Cabinet, and Bobby said, "A lot of good people went over the side with me."

HACKMAN: - Yeah. - Were you convinced that Robert Kennedy wanted to be vice president, wanted the nomination?

CONWAY: Yeah. I think so.

HACKMAN: Through O'Donnell or from personal conversation?

CONWAY: Oh, you know, just the one conversation was all I had, and the rest of it was discussion with Ken.

HACKMAN: Had you gotten involved at all in discussions of activities for Robert Kennedy in any of the primaries early in '64, you know, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, or any of these kinds of things?

CONWAY: Well, not in '64, no. No, I didn't have any discussion with Bobby Kennedy about his own political business until, really, after he made the decision to resign and to go to New York and run for senator. He made that decision himself. He thought it through and made all of the calculations that went into that. I wasn't a party to that at all.

I saw him a good bit of the time after he was elected senator, of course, because I dealt with him. He was on the committee that handled the OEO legislation. He, of course, had a deep interest in VISTA and the community action program. So for a year, starting in the spring of '64 all the way around into the following October, part of that time he was in the attorney general's office, part of the time he was a candidate, part of the time he was a senator. So over that span of time I was just deeply engrossed in the task force activities on the war on

poverty and the development of the community action program. Now, my highest concern during that period was not to get caught up in the social circle of the Kennedy family. I didn't want to do the thing, in the first place because of that. Sarge Shriver pursued me; Frank Mankiewicz helped him in this regard to get me to do this. I agreed finally to just set it up [the Community Action Program]. I had no desire to work for Lyndon Johnson and didn't want to get involved in this administration. So that whole period was kind of, almost an effort on my part to stay aloof from what was obviously going to develop into a family difference. I never was interested in the family as a family, stayed away from it all the time, very little social activities. So I had to steer a fairly careful course during that period.

HACKMAN: From that time on until, let's say, late '67, what kinds of contacts are there after you leave OEO?

CONWAY: Well, on my confirmation on the OEO appointment, Bobby in a sense was the sponsor, introduced me to the committee and pulled that through pretty fast. We talked about a number of perfecting amendments on the legislation the second time it went through, the 1-D funds, the special impact moneys that were included leading to the Bedford-Stuyvesant activity. I helped out in some of the original designwork on the Bedford-Stuyvesant thing.

And when it became clear that he was getting edgy on the war, I reinforced his feelings that he had to speak out against it. When [Eugene J.] Gene McCarthy made the move for the presidency, I could tell from the way he was behaving that this bothered him. All of the discussions that we had, and they were fairly frequent--every three or four weeks or so, some dropping by visit in his office or meeting someplace. . . . The thing that finally became, I think, the. . . .

Roy Reuther's death in December of '67--would it have been--Bob came to Detroit for the funeral. We stood side by side for about two or three hours in the course of that. And we carried on, between discussions with members of the Reuther family, a conversation that was really like two deeply frustrated men talking about how bad the country was off and how there was simply no way to deal through the present institutional structure, that everything was stacked against progress and change and so on, and that what really was required was breaking the whole thing open. I knew at that time that he was considering running for the presidency.

We agreed to talk about it further. And, then, I went in and visited with him several times in January and February. I was giving considerable thought to his candidacy at this point, and most of my urgings were that he not do it because of the dangers, the personal dangers. But it was very clear to me that he was fatalistic and that

it was something he was prepared to face. There were many times when I thought it was almost compulsive on his part to face it.

Anyway, he finally made the decision to go, after the New Hampshire thing, and called me up and said, "Well, I've announced it." I said, "Yeah, I know. I saw you on television." So he said, "What are you going to do about it?" And I said, "Well, I'll do what I can." So I then proceeded to get involved. And I got involved in his campaign very deeply. We put the California delegation together--that's quite a story in itself. But that was essentially done by Bob Kennedy and Paul Schrade and [Jesse M] Jess Unruh and me, you know, over a very short period of time. I worked inside the UAW again but from the outside, since I wasn't there, and against Walter Reuther, all around in the primary states. Walter Reuther was for Humphrey, so it was a much more complicated thing. But we won every primary except Oregon. I didn't have anything to do with that one.

HACKMAN: What kept Walter Reuther from endorsing Humphrey? Tradition? UAW tradition again?

CONWAY: Yeah. Well, and the other thing is that he knew he had a deep division, and we organized it. By the time Bob came to the UAW convention in addition to Paul Schrade I had two blacks, I had [Kenneth] Ken Morris, Olga Madar, [Kenneth] Ken Bannon, [Douglas A.] Doug Fraser, Leonard Woodcock, [Martin] Gerger, [Charles] Kerrigan, Ray Berndt, [Ray] Ross. I had all the powers. It was kind of a showdown at the UAW convention between Humphrey and Kennedy. We were at a great disadvantage, but we did extremely well. Walter would have been prepared, I suppose, eventually to come out in support of Bob, but we would have had to beat him. And we were prepared to do it.

HACKMAN: What was his. . . . You haven't talked much about Walter Reuther's personal relationship over the years with Robert Kennedy. Why by that time was he . . .

CONWAY: Well, again, it was very good, very personable. They liked each other, but the generation gap was even greater. Roy and Bob had a beautiful friendship, and the same thing was true of Bob and me and Paul Schrade and Bob. But there were just a lot of other things happening, not the least of which was the war and the fact that Reuther was slow in changing, and we, you know, were building pressure against him. He was really beaten in his own board on a half a dozen issues, and it was becoming quite a problem. Most of the rest of it's just detail, really.

HACKMAN: Yeah, well, it's twelve. [Interruption]