**James J. Reynolds Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 5/01/1970**
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**Biographical Note**
James J. Reynolds (1907-1986) was the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor-Management Relations from 1961 to 1967. This interview focuses on the staff of the Labor Department during the Kennedy administration, legislation concerning labor, and the relationship between the White House and the Labor Department, among other topics.

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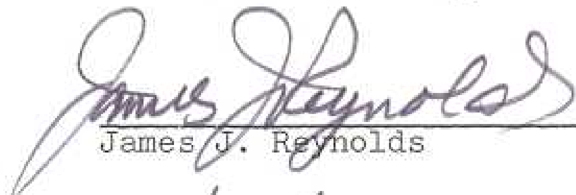

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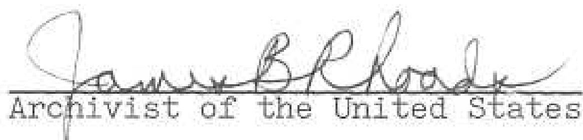

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Oral History Interview

with

JAMES J. REYNOLDS

May 1, 1970
Washington, D. C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Reynolds, let me begin by starting at the beginning and asking you what were the circumstances of your appointment as assistant secretary of labor for labor management relations in the Kennedy administration.

REYNOLDS: Fine, Mr. Moss. Well, you recall that Arthur Goldberg was the secretary of labor-designate in December of 1960 and I, at that time, was the vice president of operations of the American Locomotive Company, which was generally known as ALCO. And through the years I had gotten to know Mr. Goldberg very well because of his activities as counsel for the Steelworkers Union (United Steel Workers Union of America). And frequently, when my eight plants around the country would be involved in a difficult labor problem, it would be my responsibility to ultimately discuss the matter with the then president of the Steelworkers, David McDonald. And in all cases Secretary Goldberg was at his right hand.

Secretary Goldberg was more than a counsel to that union, he was just as important, actually, as was the president of the union in a decision-making way. And through those years we developed a mutual respect and some affection, I believe, for one another. When he became secretary of labor-designate, he felt it would be a good idea to have on his team a

quote, "liberal industrialist," and that's apparently why he called me and asked whether or not he could suggest my name to President Kennedy. I agreed and he did so, and that's how the appointment came about. It's as simple as that.

I had known Secretary Goldberg many years before starting in 1946, when I had left the navy after World War II where I had been a commander and served as adviser to Secretary (James V.) Forrestal in labor matters, and had been, in '46, appointed by President (Harry S.) Truman to the National Labor Relations Board under the last years of the Wagner Act and the beginning of Taft-Hartley. So actually my contact with Secretary Goldberg had begun in those days on a rather casual basis, but my knowledge of labor law, my practical experience with labor relations and so forth, plus later in my career being vice president of a major corporation, I think were the qualifications and the background experience which appealed to Secretary Goldberg and, obviously, also to President Kennedy. So that's how it came about.

MOSS: Did he talk to you about the specific job of assistant secretary?

REYNOLDS: No. To get the record absolutely straight, he spoke to me about becoming under secretary of labor. His thought was that, as he put it to me, "Here I come with an orientation from the labor movement albeit as an attorney rather than as a trade union man and you from industry, and I'd like you to be my under secretary if President Kennedy agrees, so that here I as Secretary from labor for you as under secretary from management would envision the role of the Department of Labor as a much broader one than it has heretofore held. The department should not just pursue the parochial aims that are set forth in its charter of fostering the interests of laboring people." He said, "I envision the Labor Department as a much more important agency than that and one that touches on the lives of practically every citizen in many ways so that, "he said," it seems to me to have a person with an industrial background as my under secretary would be fine."

Well, what happened was a few weeks later he called me and asked sould I mind accepting the position of assistant secretary, since it had been decided by the president that he wanted to name Willard Wirtz as under secretary. I understood this

throughly because I knew how deeply involved Secretary Wirtz had been with Governor (Adlai E.) Stevenson in his campaigns and, indeed, in the events leading up to the ultimate nomination of Mr. Kennedy in Los Angeles. I also knew Mr. Wirtz by reputation from his days on the Wage Stabilization Board during the Korean situation and earlier. I had the utmost respect for him, although I did not know him personally. So I understood this thoroughly, and all I was concerned with was working for the nation and working under John Kennedy. I had had only casual contact with Mr. Kennedy when I was on the National Labor Relations Board and he was a member of the House Labor Committee.

MOSS: Right.

REYNOLDS: And when I would appear occasionally back in those days testifying on the proposed amendments which later became Taft-Hartley, he was one of the congressmen to whom I would address my answers.

MOSS: How did he strike you in those days?

REYNOLDS: Quite frankly, he struck me as a very attractive young man who did not have any depth of understanding of the labor laws, who did not seem to have any desire to ask penetrating questions or to get into the meat of what was proposed by Senator (Robert A.) Taft at all. In fact, I thought his whole attitude was very casual about the whole matter, and I was not impressed at all, except as to what a very attractive chap he was, period.

MOSS: At what point did you concept of him begin to change?

REYNOLDS: My concept of him changed after a lapse of years. Then it was through carefully reading every word that he uttered during his campaign, reading and listening to his speeches and realizing that this was a man who had developed tremendously during the period between 1947, when I first came in contact with him, and 1960. The forthright and courageous way that he went into important issues aroused my interest, my admiration and excitement, that here was a man who was the antithesis of the kind of poor leadership we had at the time in the nation, who was prepared to really move in many areas of the unfinished business of America. So the idea and the prospect of serving with him was extremely appealing to me. That, I recognize, is a tremendous change from my

my attitude toward him earlier which was not a positively negative one, if you please, but which arose from a feeling that there were members of that House Labor Committee who were much more intelligent, much more dedicated and devoted to the assignment than he was.

MOSS: I'd like to go back to something you said earlier about Secretary Goldberg's ideas for the department and a broader view of the charter. Did he spell this out to you in any way, and what did he expect you to do along these lines?

REYNOLDS: Well, he didn't at that time assign specific duties to me. It was just in general terms that he said, "The Department of Labor has been an extremely limited and parochial department for years, and I envision it as much broader than that. I want it to be a department which will have the respect of management people as well as of labor, a department which will attack the problem of unemployment, which will attack the problems of training the disadvantaged." Even before he became secretary, Arthur Goldberg was thinking in these terms. And he was thinking in terms of the department being a much more important voice in the government with respect to policies that had to do with the economy; which had to do with the soundness of the dollar; which had to do with all those things that bear upon the life of Americans, not only laboring people but all kinds of people.

And certainly, when he assumed the leadership of the department he changed it dramatically, and it became an entirely different department as was evident in 1963 when we had the fiftieth anniversary of the department it having been founded on March 4, 1913 on the closing day of President (William H.) Taft's administration. When we had the celebration around the country speakers from various levels and segments of our society spoke about the role of the Labor Department that was being pursued under President Kennedy, you knew it was just an entire new ball game. We were into so many areas that the department had never before felt they should get into under the days of Mrs. (Frances) Perkins and (Lewis B.) Schwellenbach or even (James P.) Jim Mitchell and started in this broadening direction to some extent. But Goldberg really accelerated it and was completely supported by President Kennedy in doing so.

MOSS: Just as an aside here, to what extent do you think this was part of the new responsibilities of the department that came out of the Landrum-Griffin and the Welfare and Pension Plans?

REYNOLDS: I don't think that that had very much bearing on broadening the role of the department. Although, certainly the fact that the Landrum-Griffin Act, after considerable discussion in '59, was ultimately placed in

the Labor Department was a dramatic departure because for the first time it was placing the Labor Department in a role where it was going to have to police the practices and the financial rectitude of labor organizations. I might say in connection with that, that the direct supervision over the administration of the Landrum-Griffin Act was on of the first assignments that Secretary Goldberg gave me.

MOSS: Yes.

REYNOLDS: I think that one of the reasons he gave it to me was because I came from an entirely different background than he. In other words, probably I could view the administration of that statute with a higher degree of objectivity than possibly some others could because of the fact that while I had not been involved in the labor movement I had great respect fc  its role in our society. The Landrum-Griffin Act was therefore administered under my direction and the ultimate decisions were made by me and not by Secretary Goldberg, and he preferred it that way.

MOSS: And what sort of things was he asking you to do in the administration of the act?

REYNOLDS: Well, it was in the administration of the act that Attorney General Robert Kennedy and he joined forces Attorney General Kennedy, having been counsel to the (John L.) McClellan Committee, was deeply sensitive to the charge that there were labor unions in this country which were possibly conducting their affairs in a manner which was not in the best interest of their members, but rather in the best interests of a few leaders of the union. He stressed that the number of such labor organizations was very small. But where they could be found, he wanted them brought to task. I recall a meeting with Attorney General Kennedy, Secretary Goldberg, and myself at which the attorney general said, "Arthur, I'm not concerned about some labor leaders having an expense account that may beunconscionable and unjustified." He said, "What I'm concerned about are unions that exploit little people, poor people, and indulge in sweetheart contracts. Specifically, I have in mind Puerto Ricans in New York City, where I have reason to believe that there are labor leaders who conclude contracts with employers for a pay-off which really don't give these people what they should have. Whether that comes under Landrum-Griffin or not, I want it brought out in the open. I want to try to protect little people who are being exploited by labor leaders."

Let me, if I may, say also in directing my thinking toward the new dimension of the department, I think one of the reflections of that very early period in the game was the establishment at Secretary Goldberg's suggestion of the President's Labor-Management Advisory Committee. That committee had five industrialists, five labor leaders, and what we called five public members, two of whom were the secretary of labor and the secretary of commerce. And those industrial leaders included Thomas Watson of the IBM (International Business Machines Corporation), Henry Ford, Joseph Block of Inland Steel (Company), and Richard Reynolds of Reynolds Aluminum (Reynolds Metals Company)--men of considerable stature, as is obvious. And on the labor side, it had Mr. (George) Meany and it had Mr. (David) Dubinsky and it had David McDonald; it had (Joseph D.) Joe Keenan; men of equal stature in the labor movements. It had originally the man who succeeded John L. Lewis, but who lived only a little while, Mr. (Thomas P,) Kennedy, and he was succeeded then by (William Anthony) Tony Boyle. So you had the top leaders and you had the top industrialists of the country sitting down together under the leadership of a secretary of commerce and a secretary of labor, who passed the chairmanship back to one another each year. The first year it was labor; the next year commerce, and so forth. And joined with them as public members were Mr. (Ralph Emerson) McGill, the publisher of the Atlanta Constitution; Arthur Burns, who is the present chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and in those days was a professor at Columbia University and had been on the Economic Council for (Dwight D.) Eisenhower; and Prof. George Taylor of the Wharton School. There was no thought given to the political complexion of any of the members. They were chosen because they were leaders.

And when that group met--and they met very frequently with President Kennedy--they didn't discuss labor-management peace, they didn't discuss strikes; they discussed such matters as Walter Heller's suggestion for a tax cut of $11 billion to generate $33 billion GNP (gross national product) because, from our point of view, it meant jobs and from the secretary of commerce, Secretary Mr. (Luther H.) Hodges point of view it meant a better level of industrial activity. Thus it was that President Kennedy sought the advice of these people as to whether or not Walter Heller's recommendations were sound. And I recall that the one individual of that whole committee who was extremely skeptical about this approach and who spoke at great, great length against it was Arthur Burns who, you know, has emerged as counsel to President Nixon and more recently became the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Arthur was apparently reading Adam Smith, every morning before he came to the meetings, and the concept of Walter Heller applying the Keynesian (John Maynard Keynes) philosophy of tax cuts in the face of a deficit

to him was shocking. "It will not work, Mr. President," he repeated time and again. Well, President Kennedy disagreed, as you know, and was endeavoring to get legislative approval for that cut when he unfortunately died.

That committee, it seems to me, reflects more than any single activity of those days the new dimension of Department of Labor. There was a committee established at the recommendation of the secretary of labor which included leading industrialists which was designed to get into all the broad questions that affected the lives of all levels of people, not just laboring people.

MOSS: Okay, taking up on that for a minute, even though it's somewhat out of sequence in my outline, you stated that they talked about general economic subjects rather than labor-management peace, and yet there was appointed in the railroad dispute a subcommittee of this committee to review the dispute. How do people feel about using the committee this way?

REYNOLDS: Well, it came I think as quite a shock to all the members. That was in 1963, and whether the idea came from Secretary Goldberg or the president himself I do not know. But it was another technique that could be employed to bring to bear as high-level thinking as you could get on a most serious labor dispute. Incidentally, a member of that ad hoc committee was a railroad president, Stuart Saunders. And you also had George Meany. So it was a unique opportunity to get high-level thinking and advice to the president on what was the first major rail crisis in many, many years. Unfortunately, they were unable to resolve it and ultimately it had to go to a legislative recommendation.

Now apropos of that--and I think this is significant--I recall that Mr. (Theodore C.) Sorensen, after conferring with Secretary Wirtz and myself, came up with a specific statutory scheme to be discussed with President Kennedy to determine whether he would approve seeking congressional approval. (Interruption) President Kennedy after going over it turned to me--and there were just the four of us sitting in his office--and he said, "Jim, is this approach fair to management?" He said, "I want you to answer that question. I believe it's fair to labor, but I want to know, is it fair to management? Throughout all the discussions of this subject they have been completely frank and cooperative with me. I'm not concerned about anything except is this a fair, objective approach to a difficult labor dispute." He wasn't

concerned not did he ask once what would be the political reaction of labor. Not what would labor do with respect to this going up on the Hill with his name on it. Not once. Was it fair; was it technically a good approach and was it an honorable approach? And those were the only yardsticks he'd applied, and I always recall that because to me it reflected the highest kind of approach to a difficult labor problem. He wasn't evaluating the political advantages or disadvantages, only, "Is it right, is it fair? If so let's do it." And then he gave the word, "Go ahead and do it."

MOSS: Well, I think we can get back to the railroad dispute a little later. Let me ask you about a couple of other things on the Labor-Management Policy Committee. They were also assigned the task of looking over the Taft-Hartley situation, weren't they, and the national emergency disputes legislation?

REYNOLDS: Yes.

MOSS: And as I understand it, a report went forward to the president from the committee with dissents, I believe, from Joe Block and Henry Ford.

REYNOLDS: That is correct.

MOSS: Can you tell me something about the thinking and the discussion that went into this report?

REYNOLDS: Well, there was a long dialogue that went on, not only among the members of the committee, but many of them assigned top level staff people of their own to continue the deliberations. But there could not be unanimity of approach on the subject of what to do with the emergency disputes section of Taft-Hartley. There was a division with respect to whether there should be compulsory arbitration in this country or whether there shouldn't. Basically, that was the issue upon which they failed to agree. And the report came out, but it never got far in terms of attempts to implement changes in legislative enactment.

MOSS: You remember the reception of the president to this report, what he thought of it and how he reacted to it?

REYNOLDS: Frankly, I don't. I was not privileged to be present at the time it was presented to him at that stage of

of the game. My involvement, more intimate involvement, with the committee and with the president came a little later--particularly that brief period after Secretary Goldberg left and Secretary Wirtz assumed the position of secretary.

MOSS: Why was it that you had a particularly intimate relationship with the committee at that time?

REYNOLDS: Because when Arthur Goldberg left and Secretary Wirtz assumed the secretaryship of the Department of Labor, he very flatteringly depended on me a great deal for many, many areas, although, for a time he had a different under secretary than subsequently when I became his under secretary under President Johnson. He looked to me as his backup in all the important and sensitive areas of our activities in the department, such as manpower and labor relations matters. So with this committee, I became deeply involved, attended all the meetings with both President Kennedy and President Johnson. I don't know how else to put it except that I became fairly useful with respect to what they would do and how they would do it.

MOSS: Just as a comparison, how would you account for the relative success of this committee and the disaster. practically of the business council, Business Advisory Council thing under Luther Hodges?

REYNOLDS: Well, I think that the unfortunate developments with respect to the business council arose because the business council had, in the previous administration, assumed an importance and had assumed a role which President Kennedy found distasteful; namely, they were too deeply involved in decisional-making activities of the previous cabinet. He felt this was wrong; that they should be, in effect, just an advisory business council; that he was interested in hearing what they had to say, but that they had not been an advisory committee as his labor-management committee was. That was a committee that was set up to react and advise the president.

The business council on the other hand, he felt, was a top level group of businessmen who met-- with a considerable secrecy, and discussed their own affairs and developed their own positions and then frequently attempted to have those positions implemented by very effective and direct lobbying of members of the Eisenhower cabinet. The president just didn't want to have that continued. I think it's as simple as that.

MOSS: Okay, fine. Let me come right back again to the beginning and ask you one or two questions. Was there any opposition to your appointment--from labor, perhaps?

REYNOLDS: Not that I'm aware of.

MOSS: In the Congress?

REYNOLDS: No. Matter of fact, they received me extremely cordially and without the slightest hesitation approved my nomination immediately. There wasn't any controversy with respect to that. I think that as far as labor was concerned, my record on the National Labor Relations Board, while not one that they found a great basis for enthusiasm about since I was one of the most active dissenters that the board ever had, reflected that I was an indivdual who was objective, who was fair-minded, who had a basic admiration for the proper place of labor unions in our society. On a personal basis, I had some very warm friendships in the labor movement that had developed through the years just by reason of various contacts through my business. For instance, the vice president of the steelworkers, Joe Malony, became one of my dearest friends; although constantly, he was my bete noire in many of the battles we had, in many of the strikes we had. So, it was very heart-warming that there was no opposition to my appointment.

MOSS: Did you have any reservations about taking the job?

REYNOLDS: None whatsoever.

MOSS: Okay. Now; how about choosing your own team within your area? They are pretty well career service people, aren't they, in the bureaus?

REYNOLDS: Yes for the most part. I might say, incidentally, in connection with that, because I think it's relevant, that one of the assignments that President Goldberg gave me . . .

MOSS: Secretary Goldberg.

REYNOLDS: Secretary Goldberg, pardon me. You get a little confused these days of 1970 whether to call him justice, or secretary, ambassador, your eminence, you know.

MOSS: And soon governor, perhaps. (Laughter)

REYNOLDS: Possibly, yes. But anyway, one of the assignments that he gave me, in addition to my duties in direct Labor Department matters including Landrum-Griffin, was to handle any political patronage.

MOSS: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Again, I think that Arthur rather adroitly did this because I was about as politically motivated as a mink. I had been a Democrat all my life, but a private citizen Democrat, and I had no connections with politicians. So very early in the game I worked out a relationship with Mr. (Lawrence F.) O'Brien and Mr. Donahue on the White House staff, Dick Donahue, which was a perfectly splendid one. The understanding was that as far as Secretary Goldberg was concerned, any people who were appointed in the Labor Department were to be competent people, were to be people who could do the jobs to which they were assigned and do them with credit to the administration, and to do otherwise was really in the long run a disservice to the president. I said, "If the time ever does arise where you have to recommend to me someone that you know is not thoroughly competent, but to whom there may be a political debt owed, I want you to tell me that very frankly, and I'll see to it that, if it's humanly possible, that individual is assigned to a position where he can never do any injury to the public welfare but will be in a position where he can do some routine job that has to be done but which will be very limited." I think in the entire time of President Kennedy's administration there was only one occasion when I was called by one of these people, and I was told, "Look. This chap, we have to find a job for him. He isn't very competent; he's a decent individual; he's honest and so forth, but that's about all we can say about him."

MOSS: Would you rather not name names on this?

REYNOLDS: Yes, I think so. But I regarded that as a way to handle things. So I met this chap, and I was able to put him into a position where he not only did well, but he did very well, because it was a kind of a limited responsibility that he could handle and handle with considerable credit. But everyone else appointed was on the basis of merit.

And an example, it seems to me--as ridiculous as it may sound--of the lack of political pressures to appoint any individual to a particular job as reflected in this: I had, among various activities

under my responsibility, a committee headed by Dr. (James Bryant) Conant on youths and juvenile delinquency and so forth for which I needed a competent assistant. And one day a young man came in to see me seeking such a position. He said, "I am just sort of gung-ho about getting in the government. I'm a schoolteacher. Here's my background." He gave me his whole background. I was so impressed with this fellow and his whole background I said, "I'd like you to meet Secretary Goldberg." I walked up the hall with him, and his name was Salinger. Walking up the hall, I said, "You know, it's a strange thing, your name is fairly well-known in this administration because the president's press secretary is Pierre (Pierre E. G. Salinger)." And he said, "Yes, he's my brother."

He had never once mentioned that. Never once mentioned it. And I hired this boy, his name was Herbert Salinger, and he was just superb; he was just great. And he stayed with us for a long time and went back to be the assistant superintendent of schools in the Napa Valley. But, I think that's a reflection. Pierre didn't call me; O'Brien didn't call me; Donahue didn't call me to say, "Look, we want a job for this boy." And he, when he came in, only spoke of his background, his education, his qualifications. And somehow or other, one has to believe that this is a unique situation. That here was an administration which was really so committed to rectitude and competence that there were no pressures of that sort.

And this was consistent with the first meeting we all had together-- I'll never forget it-- of Secretary Goldberg and his team. Every one of us went around the room and listed what stocks we held what private interests we had, and everything had to be sold. One member of the team had been left one-fifth interest in an apartment house, and Arthur said, "Well, some day that apartment may be in conflict with the building services union. You better get rid of it." And we got rid of everything. There was no thought of anything for personal advantage in Jack Kennedy's administration. I do think it was resplendent in that regard. There was just no thought of it.

I recall that on one occasion the former ambassador to France had called me to seek assistance in getting the chef from the Elysee Palace into this country to be his private chef. I looked into it. The fellow was unique; as an international chef his prospective employer was an entertainer of many notables from abroad, and I did it, I approved it, and permitted his entry.

MOSS: This was at the time when there was the policy of only

people with unique skills being brought in. . .

REYNOLDS: That is right. And the man was brought in because in my judgment he should've been brought in. There wasn't anyone who was going to lose a position because of this. He was unique in French cuisine and so forth. The next day at my apartment there was delivered a case of champagne and a case of Johnny Walker Black Label. I said to the deliveryman, "I didn't order anything." He said, "Well, there's a card with it." And the card was of this man. I said, "Just pick it all up and take it right back where it came from." You know, none of us would think of taking a gift beyond what President Kennedy used to say jokingly, you know, had the value of a large ham or that you could eat at one sitting. So, in the political arena we were clean and the Labor Department was never suspect in terms of being a repository for every kind of hack for a job.

MOSS: This comes later, but it leads into the (Jerry R.) Holleman situation, of course.

REYNOLDS: Right.

MOSS: Would you like to comment on that?

REYNOLDS: I know very little of how Holleman got to be assistant secretary but I'm told that it was not through Mr. Meany but it was through then Vice President Johnson. Texas labor unions had gone for support of President Kennedy; Mr. Holleman had been the state federation director, and it was strictly for that reason that he was put in there. He was a decent, competent chap. We all worked together very well. Then, of course, when the incident with Billy Sol Estes occurred, everyone was shocked. But there was no equivocation on what had to be done. And it was just done, zap, and Mr. Holleman was extremely bitter about that. He saw nothing wrong in accepting a gift of a thousand dollars from an old friend who had visited his home and who was aware of the fact that on the salaries we were all getting back in the beginning of the administration it was costing Holleman money to serve the country and to live. It cost all of us quite a bit of money. And since he was a good friend, he gave him a thousand dollars. He saw nothing wrong about it. Well, we all did see something wrong about it, and that was the end of it. Out.

MOSS: What were your impressions of the rest of the Goldberg team?

REYNOLDS: I thought we had a very good team. Of course, Under

Secretary Wirtz was superb. Esther Peterson just had a great flair for working on the Hill because of her long experience as a lobbyist in the labor movement. She could charm the skin off any senator or congressman up there and was of inestimable value to Secretary Goldberg in the implementation of President Kennedy's legislative program. For instance, the first increase in the Fair Labor Standards Act in years and years, we put that fairly early in the game, and raised the minimum wage.

And incidentally, it might be of interest and somewhat amusing that when that bill was up before the House- - and it was a very close battle because we were also broadening the coverage of the act as well as increasing the minimum, and there were a great many industrial interests that were effectively and vigorously pursuing the opposition--President Kennedy told Secretary Goldberg that no matter what time it was at night, he wanted him to call him if the bill was acted upon. So, about one o'clock in the morning, Secretary Goldberg called President Kennedy and was very happy to tell him the bill had passed. And he quoted a line from that poem about the Battle of Waterloo when the little messenger came and said he did not know what they were fighting about, "but'twas a noble fight, sir,'and smiling the boy fell dead." And Arthur quoted this, " 'Twas a noble fight, sir,' and we won." And President Kennedy paused for a moment, here he was awakend out of a deep sleep, and then he said, "(Algernon C.) Swinburne, yes Swinburne. That's great."

So, the next morning we're all meeting, and Arthur said, "Isn't it magnificant to have such an erudite president. In the middle of the night you wake him and you quote from a poem, and he give you the author right away." Steve Shulman, Arthur's assistant quietly left the staff meeting, and he came back with Bartlett's Quotations. And of course, the poem was by (Robert) Southey, one of the lesser known poets. So, he said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm afraid I have to correct you." (Laughter) And we thought that was just so delight--ful, you know.

But the relationship with President Kennedy for all of us was superb. I don't think the years have changed it and given us an enlarged sense of nostalgia about it that we didn't have every moment we were there. By a process of osmosis he got you to do things that you didn't know you could do yourself. And when something would come off well - - and I know one thing you don't want is a eulogy of President Kennedy - - the technique that he used was simple.

I recall, there was a strike of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and it was a deeply sensitive issue between President Kennedy and Prime

Minister (Lester) Pearson. I was involved and managed to get it settled. The next morning my secretary told me the president was on the phone. He said, "Jim, I just want you to know that I think you did a great thing yesterday, and I want you to know I appreciate it," and hung up the phone. And that was it. Well, later on there was another president, and if that sort of thing happened and the phone rang, it would be a ten-minute conversation about "I didn't know what I had over there. You don't know what you mean to me," or "This is the greatest thing that ever happened" when it really wasn't at all. So President Kennedy, his utter sincerity and his utter directness was just something that made us all so devoted to his leadership.

Getting back to the team, Esther Peterson was superb in her activities. Wirtz was just magnificant. Holleman had the minor roll in the group, I would say. Arthur also had brought in - - or rather he had continued, Ewan Clague as the commissioner of labor statistics. Clague's reputation was impeccable in the world of economic statistics, and Arthur kept him on. The director of the Wage and Hour Division, which was also an extremely important area, and for which I ultimately assumed responsibility, was headed by a (Richard M.) Nixon appointee, chap named (Clarence T.) Lundquist. I recall sitting down with Arthur after we were getting a bit of political pressure to remove him, and Arthur said, "What do you think of him?" And I said, "I think he's the best administrator of any man in the department. His people work more effectively than the Landrum-Griffin people or the Women's Bureau or any other place. I think he's just a fine public servant." Arthur said, "That's good enough for me." And we wouldn't remove him and he stayed right along until he retired here a year ago.

MOSS: George Weaver?

REYNOLDS: George, who was put in charge of the (Bureau of) International Labor Affairs because of his background with the IUE (International Union of Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers), where he had done a great deal of work out in the Far East, developed considerable stature in the ILO (International Labor Organization). He became, as you probably know, the chairman of the ILO council, the governing part of the board of governors. He also- - ugly as it may sound - - by the accident of having been a Negro, added to his capacity to deal with so many of the delegates from the emerging African nations. They could see that here was a competent chap in his field who also was a Negro. So when they heard the stories of some of the ugly aspects of life here with respect to minority people, they could see one of the government's top officials who was there not because he was black but because he was very competent in his field. So George

worked out great.

So it was really a wonderful team, and we were a hard-working, swinging team. We were devoted to another. We complemented one another's talents effectively so it made for a very, what they would call in the navy, a happy ship and an efficient ship.

MOSS: One or two other people I'd like to to talk about a little bit: Millard Cass, who was more or less a continuity factor.

REYNOLDS: Yes! Millard, you know, is like Kringelein in the Grand Hotel. He's always in the lobby there watching life go on. He's been there, of course, since the days of (David A.) Dave Morse when Dave was under secretary. An Millard is just an exquisite little man who can take on any routine assignment and do it just better than anybody that you've ever heard of. He was not a man who endeared himself to his colleagues in the department because I think they always felt that he was terribly self-seeking. But our appraisal of him was probably best reflected by realization that both Secretary Goldberg and Secretary Wirtz recommended him for top awards, and as you know, he did receive one of the top awards ever given to government employees. He was devoted; he was politically ambivalent; you never were conscious whether he was a Democrat or a Republican. He was just a darn good, hard-working public servant - - but not quite of the stature that you possibly would want him to be under secretary or assistant secretary. He always just stayed where he was and was very useful because he could always provide the continuity from Jim Mitchell to Goldberg to Wirtz to (George P.) Shultz, you know. And he fulfills an extremely useful and important role in that respect.

MOSS: Now, ostensibly at least, from a structural point of view and according to the (Herbert J.) Hoover Commission's desires, the administrative assistant secretary is supposed to provide that continuity.

REYNOLDS: Yes.

MOSS: You had (James E.) Dodson and then Leo Wertz. . .

REYNOLDS: Leo Wertz, yes.

MOSS: . . . to replace him. Would you comment on their contributions?

REYNOLDS: Well, you know, as I said, it sounds like everybody over there is great, but you've hit again on two, in my opinion, two superb public servants. Again, two political eunuchs as far as I could ever detect. All they were concerned about was running the department effectively and efficiently and trying to reflect the general philosophy and approach of their particular secretary, never hesitating to raise points of criticism or objections respectfully; but once a decision was made, that was it, and they'd go along. But this wasn't difficult under Arthur Goldberg and Bill Wirtz because, believe it or not, with respect to administrative activities, they both pursued a Spartan philosophy. I mean even to paint an office was pretty unusual in our administration. I had to wait until Bill Wirtz went off to Japan or someplace to have his office carpeted because it was so raggedy people were falling, and Bill wouldn't do it. I might say, with a complete lack of objectivity, it makes me laugh when I go to the department now and go in my old office --you know, it's like I'm walking into the finest club in America.

When we were assistant secretaries, of course, you never had a car and driver. There were a couple of cars available in the pool, and if you had to go somewhere, there'd be one available or not. Things have changed, however, and now 1970 each assistant secretary has his car and his driver. The solicitor has a car and driver. It's rather amusing to me because the general impression is that the Democrats are the ones who throw the money around so easily. But they didn't with President Kennedy, and they didn't with President (Lyndon B.) Johnson, I can assure you.

MOSS: You mentioned the solicitor. You haven't talked about (Charles) Donahue.

REYNOLDS: All right, Charlie Donahue. He was an appointee who came out of the labor movement. He was counsel, as you may know, to the United Association of Plumbers. He was, again, a very hard-working, competent chap. He had a good legal background--Harvard Law, Princeton College. I don't know what to say beyond that he did his job effectively. He was not, you know, one of the leaders of the group, but that isn't the role a solicitor should play anyway. He was there to give us all legal advice, and when he did give advice, he was very stubborn about staying with it. I had many, many difficulties, in a sense, with Mr. Donahue because in the administration of the Landrum-Griffin Act many legal questions would arise. And frequently, my view as to whether a case should be pursued in the courts in an

enforcement action would differ from his. I think, frequently, lawyers are very sensitive to the scorecard, the record. They want to be sure they have a winner. And I was a little more concerned about what I regarded as justice, and even if there was only a 50 percent chance of getting a conviction where I had every reason to believe there was wrongdoing, I would want to take that chance. But I think sometimes the solicitor's office would be more concerned with an attitude of saying, "Look. The chances of a conviction are not good, therefore, we don't want to pursue the case. We will not refer it to Justice and ask them to go ahead with it." This never resulted in a lack of or respect or impairment of for one another, but it did occasionally result in very sharp differences of approach. I don't think this is anything unusual between a lawyer and his client.

MOSS: Turning to a slightly different area, how useful was your introduction to the areas you were to be responsible for by your predecesor and the career people?

REYNOLDS: How interesting . . .

MOSS: How useful was it? Or did you have such briefings?

REYNOLDS: Quite frankly, the briefings we got from the outgoing administration were worthless. In my opinion, they were shocking. And again, with a thorough lack of objectivity, I'm sure you probably know that when President Nixon came in and the new administration was coming in for weeks we prepared working papers for our successors. We met with them, went over details. We saw to it that they met the key people in the department and just did everything conceivable to make their transition an orderly one - - an orderly one in a working sense, not in a sense of trying to pass on a philosophy, but trying to pass on an organization that could continue to operate with new leadership. But I repeat that, outside of a very cordial meeting with Secretary Mitchell (and I think that he met with Secretary-designate Goldberg a number of times), there was - - at least it was my experience--only a casual meeting with my immediate predecessor. "Well do you want to come in again this afternoon? I'm leaving tonight," that sort of thing, the most casual kind of a business.

And quite frankly, when we did come aboard, I think that some of the Labor Department permanent employees found it a fantastic change--in fact, I know they did because they spoke to me about it--to find that the third floor was so deeply involved, and it

was persistently involved in things that went on, and it was determined to give direction and change direction and give leadership. So after the initial shock wore off, they loved it, and they embraced it and became part of a team. So the work of the Labor Department, as we got into so many programs of the Manpower and Training Act and many of the other things, was able to go forward with, I think, profit to the country.

MOSS: What were the specific problems in your area when you came in that you saw would have to be dealt with in labor-management relations--the Landrum-Griffin, the wage and hours and so forth.

REYNOLDS: Well, the Landrum-Griffin Act, of course, as you know, was quite new when we came in. There were many, many sensitive areas--sensitive in terms that all the customers under it found it an extremely distasteful law and found offensive the fact that we were on many occasions investigating the propriety of various fanancial practices. We were looking into the qualifications for running for union office, et cetera. It was something that they found very offensive. It reminded me a good deal, strangely enough, of a situation that existed when I was a young man working in Wall Street, when the (Ferdinand J.) Pecora investigations went on in the 1930's of the stock exchange followed by the hearings leading up to the Securities and Exchange Act. Members of the stock exchange, of whom I was one, were affronted that the federal government was coming into this area; "This is a private enterprise; this is sort of like a club; we know how to run our own affairs," President (Richard)Whitney testified arrogantly. Well, now by a strange turn of the wheel, here I was in a position of administering a law that labor leaders felt exactly the same way about, men who said, "What right have you got to come in and tell me I don't run a democratic union? What right have you to come in to tell me that of a union of 100,000 people only 220 can ever run for president?" So it required a good deal of diplomatic dealing and constant and persistent going at this thing to make it work.

There were some very bitter situations developed which even have their aftermath today as far as I'm concerned. When the shipping industry asked me to become president of this association when they created it in January of last year, I found that Joe Curran had sent wires and communicated otherwise with a number of the shipping company presidents demanding that they not take me on as president because when I was under secretary when we threw out his unlawful election. He was just determined that I wasn't going to have anything to do with the shipping industry. (James B.)

Jim Carey and the IUE was another case where we had to throw out an election and remove Jim Carey from the presidency, a man who was a good friend of mine. Hunter Wharton, the Operating Engineers--we found that in his organization there was a gross absence of democratic procedures at local levels in the various districts where first-class members and second-members paid different levels of dues and were given differing preference to jobs and who could or could not run for office.

So you got into an area where labor unions had so long been accustomed to run their own affairs and felt it was no one's business but their own. Now you had a situation with the government and the Laobr Department to which they had always looked as their department, coming in and getting into their affiars. And they would come to me and bitterly assail our investigators, "What right have they to come in on a fishing expedition?" And I'd say, "Because we're going to audit on a routine basis every labor union's financial affairs, international unions and local unions and you might as well recognize it. At least once every five years without a charge, we're going in and look at your practices and so forth. We're going to look at how you handle the money that doesn't belong to you."

When, for instance, the teamster's bonding elapsed--Mr. (James R.) Hoffa couldn't get his bond, which meant that in twenty-four hours neither he nor John English nor any of the other teamster officers could even sign a check he came into my office and said, "Mr. Reynolds, suppose I put a cigar box on that desk of yours in an hour with a half million dollars cash in it. Would you consider that my bond?" I said, "Where are you going to get the money?" He said, "From the treasury." I said, "Don't you realize how utterly ridiculous this is? You'll take money out of the treasury to guarantee that none of your officers will steal money from the treasury. That money isn't yours, it's the members of the teamster's money." He said, "Oh, I guess that's right." It called for a whole reorientation of thinking on the part of these people. And I would constantly say to them, "Look, I know this is wild, but there will come a day, just as there came a day to the stock exchange, where you will recognize that the Landrum-Griffin Act is one of the best things that every happened because it will gurantee democratic procedures and financial rectitude on the part of the few characters that don't practice them. It will give a new dignity and a new standing to labor in this country. So don't fight it. There's no point to it because if you fight it we're going to have to do something about it anyway. So, that was that.

MOSS: We've been going for about an hour. Is your voice getting tired?

REYNOLDS: Well, not my voice, but I don't know what else I can tell you. Oh, I made some little notes here, but they're all about individual labor disputes and so forth that President Kennedy was involved in. But why don't I just close it up?

MOSS: Well, okay. I have material. . . Let me cut it off for a moment.

(Interruption)

REYNOLDS: There was, in President Kennedy's administration, a group called the Hickory Hill group. The practice of the Hickory Hill group was to meet once a month, and a different member of the cabinet would be the host--he and his wife. He would choose the subject to be discussed, and he would announce it at the previous meeting so that various members, if they were so disposed, could do a little reading in preparing for the discussion. The host had the responsibility to bring a resource person usually a professor from one of the universities who had particular expertise in this field.

(Roswell L.) Ros Gilpatric, who was deuputy under secretary, was a member of the group, and it came his turn, he and his then-wife, to be the host and hostess, and the subject chosen was "Greatness in a President.' What makes greatness in a president?" When President Kennedy heard that this was going to be the subject, he asked that that particular meeting after dinner be transferred to the White House, and he would host it up in the private quarters. And they did, and the group reviewed the various president: what made them great or mediocre; was it just the flow of curcumstances that they were a part of or was it other things, and which men did you think had elements of greatness.

Adn President Kennedy entered into the discussion. And he felt that Thomas Jefferson was the greatest of them all, but he felt that Harry Truman was also a great president because Truman had to make great decisions, notablv the terrible decision of the bomb, and his decision on the (George C.)Marshall Plan, which were decisions that required great courage and great presence of mind. But he said, "One president who was regarded as something other than one of nature's noble men, who I regard as one who had greatness about him was Andrew Johnson." Well, this kind of rocked everybody. He said "The problems that he faced

upon the death of (Abraham) Lincoln and the deep wounds of the North and the South were problems the like of which very few presidents have ever had to face. And, met them courageously and he met them directly, and his contributions really were extremely significant. So he said, "I regard Johnson as one of the very important presidentsof this nation," which I thought was extremely interesting coming from him.

MOSS: Who were members of this Hickory Hill group? Was all the cabinet involved?

REYNOLDS: Obviously, Bob, Bob Kennedy was. (Robert S.) Bob McNamara was. Arthur was. I think (C. Douglas) Doug Dillon was. I don't know who else.

MOSS: I'm just curious if any of the cabinet people were excluded. . .

REYNOLDS: Oh, I think so. I think it was started by Bob Kennedy, and was started basically because of his camaraderie with certain members of the cabinet. It wasn't a formal or organized thing in terms of everybody in the cabinet, and Bob had a very close relationship with the McNamaras. He did with Gilpatric. He did with Dough Dillon. And it was with these people for whom he had a particular affinity that he set this up.

MOSS: . . . because the personal interrelationship has significance in the administration.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MOSS: I was wondering if anybody was feeling left out and that sort of thing and whether this had any consequences.

REYNOLDS: It's too bad. You know who could speak about that effectively, if she would do so, would be Ethel (Skakel Kennedy).

MOSS: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: The Hickory Hill group. Because it must have been a fascinating group and their discussions must've been just great.

MOSS: Yes, indeed. Okay, thank you.