Jack T. Conway Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 04/10/1972
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 the 1956 Democratic National Convention; early interactions with John F. Kennedy [JFK] and Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]; the McClellan Committee and various hearings; Walter Reuther; RFK's relationship with Senator John L. McClellan; major events for the United Automobile Workers [UAW] and political factors and decisions; the 1960 Democratic National Convention; the issue of UAW endorsement of a single Democratic presidential candidate in 1960; Johnson and the UAW; the 1960 presidential primaries and general election; and the attempt to influence JFK's choice for a running mate in 1960, among other issues.

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Jack T. Conway
JACK T. CONWAY

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Jack T. Conway – RFK #1
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Oral History Interview

with

JACK T. CONWAY

April 10, 1972
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

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

HACKMAN: Maybe you could just start off by talking about any contacts you had with either John or Robert Kennedy before the '56 [Democratic National] Convention, if there were any.

CONWAY: No, there were none. The first time I ever talked with or saw John Kennedy was at the '56 convention. It was the night following the session where Adlai Stevenson had thrown the vice presidency out for the election process. We had already made a decision--we being the people from the UAW [United Auto Workers] who were at the 1956 convention--that we were going to support Estes Kefauver. We had a celebration kind of thing planned in the Morrison Hotel and so all of our delegates were gathering for a social visit anyway. So we had probably the easiest ready-made caucus just by the circumstance, so that a number of people kept coming to that gathering to check out what our reactions were to the vice presidential question and what we were going to do. So it became known very quickly that we were going to line all of our support up behind Kefauver. We were unaware at this time that Jack Kennedy was even a candidate. We began to get some information to this effect from our New England delegates when they came to the social affair.

At some point Walter Reuther and I left to go up to our suite of rooms to meet with somebody, and in the elevator we bumped into Jack Kennedy. I'm not sure whether Bob was with him or not. I didn't

know Bob at all at the time, I probably didn't even know of his existence. And this impromptu contact lead to the three of us, or four of us as the case may be, stepping off the elevator and standing in the hallway outside while Jack Kennedy addressed himself to Walter Reuther and, in effect, asked Walter quite abruptly why he was opposing him. He asked, "Was it my farm vote or what was it that prompted you to take a position in opposition?" And Walter tried to explain, I think not to Jack's satisfaction, but at least he tried to explain that it had nothing to do with Jack himself, that we were unaware of the fact that he was even a candidate and that we were for Kefauver and not against Kennedy. Well, that ended it.

I worked all that night and the next day and, of course, when the election took place it was a very close one. Kefauver won, but only by a few votes. I was personally impressed with the vitality of the Kennedy effort. It had some effect on me. I don't think it had as much of an effect on Walter Reuther as it did on me. But I had no further contact with Jack Kennedy until the rackets committee, [Select Committee on Improper Activity in Labor-Management Relations] experience.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you on '56, in going around and building support for Kefauver, do you remember any surprising pockets of John Kennedy support, particularly among labor people in New England, or do you just remember what their attitude was?

CONWAY: Well, I remember that the labor people in New England were almost in a bloc in favor of Kefauver and advocated--I mean not of Kefauver, of Kennedy--that we support him. But other than that I didn't detect anything. I think that the thing that surprised me was the personal vitality and the youth of the Kennedy effort as contrasted with the Kefauver bid.

I had the very unpleasant task that night before the vote of going up and sitting down with Hubert Humphrey and convincing him to get out of the race, that we weren't going to support him. Those jobs of that kind are always unpleasant and I used to draw them. So it took me about two hours to convince Hubert and to get him to get out. And then I had to go over and sit down with Estes Kefauver. To my utter surprise he had his bags packed and he was leaving town. So [John J.] Jiggs Donahue and [Douglas] Doug Fraser, who was with me, and I sat and talked to Estes Kefauver until we finally got him to agree to stay in town. We wouldn't leave the room until he agreed to stay. So he said he wouldn't do any campaigning, he wouldn't meet with anybody but he would stay and he would allow his name to be put in nomination. It was, I guess, about 5 o'clock in the morning when I

finally walked back to the hotel from I think it was the Hilton Hotel, back to the Morrison. I was so fatigued by the whole business of talking to what I considered has-beens, even at that point, that the contrast the next day had quite an effect on me.

HACKMAN: Do you remember, were you there when that second ballot took place for the vice presidency, when those votes switched at a key time?

CONWAY: The switchers. No, we were in the hotel room watching it on television. We were in communication with our delegates and the various delegations on the floor by telephone. But it all happened so fast and the switches and so on, it was a very exciting thing as a matter of fact. Jack almost made it, and in later years he would laughingly joke with us and say in effect that the best thing we ever did for him was to beat him at that convention. Saved him, as a matter of fact, from winning.

HACKMAN: But you don't remember having a feeling at that time or ever having any of the Kennedy people later explain what happened in terms of the switches?

CONWAY: Well, later I talked with [Kenneth P.] Ken O'Donnell and Bob Kennedy about the convention. But it was just, you know, an unimportant kind of historical discussion. It was all history as far as I was concerned, so I never had any curiosity about it, didn't really pay much attention to it. It was a rerun election and it was clear to me that we were going to get belted in the election, and so it was an exercise.

HACKMAN: So in '56 there wasn't in your mind or in Walter Reuther's mind or Fraser's mind or whoever you can remember the fact that Bob Kennedy had worked for [Joseph R.] Joe McCarthy, therefore he's a bad guy, or old [Joseph P.] Joe Kennedy, or whatever?

CONWAY: Well, there was that. That was present. It surfaced probably for the first time in our minds then, because we had all known of the Jack Kennedy-Joe McCarthy business. It had obviously affected us. The other thing had a long, lingering effect with Walter Reuther because of his close association with Eleanor Roosevelt, who as you know felt very strongly about Jack, and the same thing is true of Hubert and Adlai Stevenson and Governor [Herbert H.] Lehman. They were all very close friends of Walter Reuther's. I knew them all, but they had a greater effect on him than they did on me. I had grown up as a kid as a Catholic and had consciously left the church when I was fifteen years of age. I was quite

anti-cleric in the sense of the church as an institution. So I had a certain amount of hostility that probably was present at that time too. But it would be based on a different set of emotions I suppose.

HACKMAN: While we're on that and just over the whole association with both Robert and John Kennedy, ever have any conversations about the church with them and get into that?

CONWAY: Never did. They never raised it with me and I never raised it with them. We did have some conversations about the religious factor in the '60 elections, and I'll talk about that because that was a very important part of the campaign.

HACKMAN: Ever any conversations about the role that John Kennedy had played in the [Harold] Chrisotffel case, the guy in the Allis-Chalmers strike back in 1941?

CONWAY: No, I'm not even sure what the role was. Never came up. You mention it, it doesn't even ring a bell. I mean it could have been a factor. I know Christoffel very well. He was from my region in the UAW and I fought him all the time. I was sorry to see him go to jail but not sorry to see him defeated in the union. Had a lot to do with his, in a sense, being driven out. But what happened to him afterwards in the court appeals and so on, we didn't have any particular involvement.

HACKMAN: In that book by Frank Cormier and [William J.] Eaton on Reuther, they say that you felt that Stevenson was for John Kennedy in '56 at the convention. Was that a strong feeling on your part?

CONWAY: Yeah, I think that that was my conclusion and that is that Kennedy was Stevenson's choice but that he couldn't see how to get there. So he consciously threw the thing open and, I think, quietly without ever, you know, making any kind of a public position on that, indicated that Kennedy would be acceptable to him. That's the feeling I had, nothing to confirm it. And I think Walter felt that way too, afterwards. He felt that the Kennedy strength had to be backed up by some organized force. Now it could just as easily have been a [Richard J.] Dick Daley rather than an Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson was a terribly weak man in my judgment. I never thought he was good politician. He was a good spiritual and emotional leader in that period for a lot of people, but he was not a very good political figure. I just didn't have that feeling that he was going any place.

HACKMAN: Can you remember, after the '56 convention, discussing Kennedy at all with any of the other leadership--other than Reuther who you've talked about--at the UAW?

CONWAY: No, from the '56 convention until the involvement of the UAW in its own problems with the McClellan committee I don't think any of us had any particular thought process that I can recall or any discussions about what was going to happen in the '60 presidential election. That came on much later. We were very preoccupied with our problems in the union, because we were going through the 1958 recession. We'd gone through, you know, one earlier recession immediately before that, we were hovering on the brink of a third one under the Eisenhower administration and carrying on our collective bargaining under very difficult circumstance. That was the period in which automation was hitting the factories and there was a lot of employment loss and all sorts of problems. So that we were quite preoccupied with that. We also had gone into the merger of the AFL [American Federation of Labor] and the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] and so we had a wholly different set of experiences that we were wrestling with. We were beginning to learn to conduct our affairs as a union again rather than as a federation. The CIO days were for all practical purposes gone, and the UAW began to concentrate on just taking care of its own problems.

HACKMAN: How then did the first contact with the Kennedys come up on the McClellan hearings? When, do you remember, either when or how?

CONWAY: Yeah. Well, I remember it very specifically. Of course, the original rackets committee [Permanent Investigations Subcommittee of the Senate Government Operations Committee] was a subcommittee of the Government Operations Committee and the composition of that was not very favorable. In the AFL-CIO executive council meetings down in January of the first year when it first came up, there was a lot of discussion about this. I don't know whether it was Arthur Goldberg or Walter Reuther, separately or together, but they suggested to George Meany that the thing that we ought to do is to go for a select committee and to try to get some better balance in the process of agreeing to that kind of a grouping. So with that agreed there was some discussion that took place as to the composition of the committee. The theory was that if we could get the Republican senator from New York. . . .

HACKMAN: [Irving M.] Ives?

CONWAY: Ives, yeah, that that would counterbalance McClellan on the Democratic side and we'd at least have an equal break.

So that's the way it started off. But Ives died very quickly, and that presented some other problems. But anyway all of the early McClellan committee stuff was centered around the Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] and the old-line racket-ridden AFL unions. There was a great deal of teeth gnashing and sensitivity over these questions. When [David D.] Dave Beck and Elinar Mohn used the Fifth Amendment, that was the beginning of a series of problems that were finally faced by the AFL-CIO. They had to recognize that a committee of the Senate did have the right to look into these things and did have the right to ask questions and that the defense of a labor leader resorting to the Fifth Amendment and that sort of stuff was an improper defense because a labor leadership position in these unions was almost one of public trust and they had to behave in a public manner.

So that, I don't know, the committee must have been in operation for the better part of a year before we got involved. We got involved because [James R.] Jimmy Hoffa working through Senator Joe McCarthy, in particular, and [Barry M.] Goldwater were trying to get some kind of a counterbalance to the intensive investigation of the Teamsters Union. So they kept taking potshots at us, public statements and so on. Joe McCarthy kept saying, in effect, when are they going to get the UAW up here, because it's a goon-type union, engages in mass picketing and physical violence and all this sort of stuff, and there's no difference between the UAW and the Teamsters. Now when McCarthy was still on the committee, as we counted numbers and began to think of the possibility that we might have to defend ourselves, we began to look at the members of the committee very carefully. And, of course, Jack Kennedy's presence on the committee was very much in our minds. But even so we didn't make any contacts or try to do anything until actually the committee met in executive session and then made the decision that they were going to investigate the UAW around the Kohler [Corporation] strike.

HACKMAN: I see. Is [Patrick V.] Pat McNamara still on the committee at this point?

CONWAY: Yes, he was. So, once the decision was made, we then had to decide what we were going to do. Walter called an officers meeting and we sat and talked for hours about it. The point of view that I held and Walter's was the same, we had to convince the other officers, but ours was to organize ourselves, gather all of the pertinent information and to take the offensive and to go to the committee rather than to wait for the committee to bring us in step by step. And so I took one or two of the fellows from our legal staff--I was put in charge of the whole thing--and got a

full-blown treatment of all of the information that we could glean about the Kohler strike.

Walter Reuther felt that Arthur Goldberg should represent us because of his personal contacts with the various members of the committee. I didn't agree with Walter on that, but I agreed to go down and talk to Arthur. The guy I wanted to represent us was [Joseph L., Jr.] Joe Rauh, for reasons that I felt that if you're going to take an offensive stance with respect to the committee and the problems that we had, you have to have that kind of a lawyer. Goldberg is a broker and Joe Rauh is a battler. Well, it was a simple problem because Goldberg didn't want to do it. He made it very clear that he just wasn't our lawyer because he had potential problems with the Steelworkers [United Steelworkers of America] over their election that they'd had. There was some possibility that the committee might be asked to get into the way the ballots were counted and that he had, as the representative of the Steelworkers Union, that first responsibility and that he didn't want to be in a position where he was going to be talking to members of the committee and the committee staff on Steelworker problems and following one course of action and then be before the committee representing another union in a completely different approach. And he said, "What you need is a lawyer like Joe Rauh." And as soon as he said that I said, "I think maybe you're right, Arthur," and I reached over and called Walter Reuther in Detroit and handed Arthur the telephone and said, "Tell him that." So that's what he did and that settled the whole question.

So I went over and met with Joe Rauh. We completed our arrangements, and he was going to represent us. Then we spent the next three or four days in Washington talking about the committee's methods, tactics, how they operated. This was the first time I had any kind of intensive discussion about Bobby Kennedy. I tried to find out from Joe and from others what kind of a person he was. I'd read a little about him in, you know, the newspapers and the periodicals, about his youth and his association with Senator McCarthy in the earlier period and so on. And I just wanted to know everything I could about him, what kind of guy he was because I figured he was the guy I was going to have to be dealing with.

When we were ready, I called up from Detroit and got Kennedy on the phone, Bob. I told him I wanted to come down with a couple members of our staff and to sit down with him and talk about the Kohler strike and the hearings and so on. So he said, "Okay." And I think I went down on a Friday afternoon, I'm not sure of the day but I took two people with me, [Joseph] Joe Walsh and Redmond Roche. Roche is a lawyer and Walsh is a public relations man. And, I don't know, we must have had forty-five minutes with Bob Kennedy and Ken O'Donnell. This

was the first time I'd ever seen Ken O'Donnell. But I went in and I had, oh, I don't know, binders full of documents and so on, one stacked on top each other, probably fourteen to fifteen inches thick. When I walked in I dropped them on the desk in front of Bob Kennedy and said, in effect, well there's everything that we know about the Kohler strike and if there's anything that you know about it that isn't covered by what we've pulled together here let me know because we'll find it and deal with it. But I made it very clear that we were going to be open and above board and direct and that if he was the same way that we'd have no trouble but if he wasn't we'd have trouble. I think he was quite stunned by this approach. We agreed to meet again the following week, or maybe the following day, I'm not sure, but he made it clear to me at that time that in his absence that I should deal with Ken O'Donnell. So when we broke up I stepped outside in the hall and talked to Ken O'Donnell. And I reiterated our position to him again and, in effect, said I don't want any end runs or anything of that sort because if we're going to deal with each other we got to be direct and honest and its two ways and we want to know exactly what the situation is all the time. So he reiterated it too. So that's how we started off.

I think Bob was pretty suspicious, felt, you know, that this was an unusual approach. He wanted to protect himself and not get trapped. So he spent quite a bit of time reading the documents, reading the staff reports on the situation.

By the time we got together again, after he'd had a chance to do that, he made a whole series of kind of countercharges that we had said that the Kohler company was an evil company, that their working conditions were bad, that all the things that we were charging the company with really couldn't be true, no company was that bad, you know, sort of thing. So I countered, after he had talked for a little while, by simply saying, "Well if you believe that, why don't you go out and take a look yourself?" And he said, "I will." And I expected him to plan on doing it, you know, like a month or so later or when it was convenient, but he got on a plane that night and went right off and spent the next day in the plant, met the company officials, went into the foundry, talked with guys, found that, in fact, they did have to eat their lunches while they were working, that the temperatures were one hundred-twenty to one hundred-thirty degrees and that all of the things that we had charged were true. I think that kind of shook him up. So that was a test that we had obviously passed.

There was never anything that happened in the course of those hearings on Kohler that, you know, we could complain about. If there was some evidence that was produced and the committee staff was aware of it, they did follow their own rules which was to talk over any new

materials or any charges or anything with the person and the organization affected to give them a chance to say that's true or that isn't or to marshall their arguments. So we were always prepared. We would have been anyway, but we were always prepared and perhaps better prepared because of the fact that we had a staff that treated us with fairness and the relationship had strong integrity.

Now that was all staff, and, as the hearings got under way, of course, I began systematically to meet and talk with the members of the committee to make sure that they were as well informed on matters that were going to be coming before them as the staff was. So we didn't rely exclusively on the committee staff to do our work for us. So it was in this connection that I got to know Senator McClellan directly. He was a cagey old man and we had to make sure that he didn't become an enemy. Even though he didn't agree with us as a union or ideologically, I have to say about that old son of a gun, too, that he did treat us with fairness. There were times when he did things as the chairman of the committee that were beneficial to us even though he disagreed with us. So that he played it straight. The fact that he did meant that we were able to come out of it pretty well.

HACKMAN: What did you see at that point about his relationship with Robert Kennedy?

CONWAY: Oh, I thought that it was a very strong personal relationship. I think that Robert Kennedy probably was more helpful than anything else in establishing the kind of relationship that we did develop with McClellan, because Kennedy's confidence in us and our integrity was conveyed personally to McClellan.

The other guy, I think, that was affected this way was old Senator [Sam J., Jr.] Ervin. Judge Ervin was a guy that we got to know and to feel free to go in and sit down and discuss specific kinds of cases with him, our problems, and feel that he would listen and make judgments based upon what was right even though he was opposed to us ideologically and other ways. But here I think the bridge was Senator Jack Kennedy rather than Bob, because the relation was very strong between Ervin and Jack Kennedy as senators. And McNamara, of course, I knew personally very well. I built up a fairly good face-to-face relationship with Jack Kennedy during that year. And again I was impressed with his intellectual capacity, his vitality and his ability to get around an idea quickly and his ability to handle detail with a minimum of briefing. This, of course, became clearer and clearer as time went on and that is that in just sixty seconds with Jack Kennedy if you knew him and how he worked, you were able to communicate quickly and effectively and completely. So that in all my workings with him there never was

any misunderstandings between us. It was almost like osmosis in the sense that we were able to communicate so quickly and effectively.

But we went through those Kohler hearings and they were very emotional, very critical to our union because we were being accused of all sorts of things. Some of them were true but the implications of what we were being accused of. . . . For example, we did engage in mass picketing. We did shut the plant down. We did do a lot of street work, you know, of talking to people out away from the plants to try to get them not to go in. There were fights and there were things that happened. Somebody did get killed, and our hands weren't completely clean. So we had to handle these situations and isolate the actual wrongdoers. This was particularly difficult because Emil Mazey, the secretary-treasurer of the UAW, had been given responsibility for the Kohler negotiations and the strike and so many of his own personal staff people were assigned to this.

We couldn't rely on McNamara, except for a vote. McNamara just didn't have much stomach for any of these guys. He didn't like Kennedy, and the fact that we worked closely with Bob, in particular, he didn't like. He respected Jack. So that I had a relationships problem there, because the more I worked with Bob, the less I relied on McNamara, the more McNamara's nose got out of joint. So I had to worry about that kind of thing. I was fortunate that Senator McNamara's chief staff guy, [Robert] Bob Perrin, was a close friend of mine. So I worked with him.

Any time there was any serious erosion, he'd alert me to it, and I'd go back and spend a few hours with the senator and patch it all up.

The thing that I learned during the course of that was through McNamara's eyes I saw Lyndon Johnson's operations in the Senate. McNamara was the kind of guy that was always teasing and gigging people like Hubert Humphrey and these other guys about the horsecollar that Lyndon Johnson had on them. He used to describe to me by the hour the way Lyndon manipulated all these guys. The [Robert C.] Bobby Baker syndrome was always there. So that, in a sense, I was going to a post-graduate course in how the Senate of the United States operated.

HACKMAN: Did you see evidence in the McClellan hearings of Johnson's hand at all or influence in any particular decision?

CONWAY: No, no I never could see any of that but all the time this was happening, of course, the Landrum-Griffin legislation was being put together. That's where Lyndon was operating. This is where Pat McNamara's mind was all the time. He was concerned about the fact that while we were in this side show over here that something was being put together in the Senate that was very dangerous. So it was in this kind of a setting, back and forth between the larger picture and the select committee's activities.

HACKMAN: Let me just ask you a couple things on the select committee. Do you remember, I think at one point the Republicans were complaining about the way the Democrats, who were the majority, [The committee was four and four, Republicans and Democrats. No majority.] were conducting the UAW hearings and, as a concession, Robert Kennedy assigned a staff guy named John McGovern? Do you remember him at all?

CONWAY: Uh uhm.

HACKMAN: To take over the investigation, in fact. He did for awhile, and then it switched back. Do you remember any. . . .

CONWAY: Well, I remember that, yeah. There were a lot of machinations of this kind. When the Republicans couldn't get their way and couldn't score, they would resort to this kind of a tactic. They'd go into executive session, and they'd try to pass something. And they did charge Bobby Kennedy with being kind of overwhelmingly in support of us and not allowing the kind of investigation that they thought should. . . . So they did put this guy McGovern in charge. And I met him.

HACKMAN: When the committee was in executive session, how much information and how would you get it on what was done in the executive session?

CONWAY: Well, I would know within a matter of minutes because Ken O'Donnell was the guy who was expected to keep in touch with me. So our communication was almost instantaneous.

HACKMAN: On the original information that the committee was going to have hearings on the UAW that would have come from McNamara at that point?

CONWAY: No, that was a public announcement. We saw that in the newspapers. I hadn't even met these guys yet. But once I was set up and functioning, I built the communication lines solidly. The other thing we did, of course, is that in taking the offensive we demanded--first of all we protested executive sessions. We said all of the work of the committee should be conducted in public and that we wanted to testify. So we joined the issue right away and said we wanted Walter Reuther to be the first witness, public witness. Well, the committee fought over that and they refused. They said before they would give Walter Reuther a forum, they were going to make their case. So they voted against us in executive session on that.

HACKMAN: Was there direct contact with John Kennedy or Robert Kennedy or O'Donnell on that?

CONWAY: Oh, yes. By that time, you see, before the hearings got under way, we'd had a series of meetings. One of our initial tactical decisions was to demand public hearings, first of all, and, secondly, that Walter Reuther testified. Both Kennedys knew what we were going to do. So they dealt with that question inside the committee as a mechanical problem. We lost because McClellan and Ervin wouldn't go along with it. So that we had constant tests of this kind as we would make moves in order to force the issue in the way we wanted it joined. We never pulled any surprises on Bob nor he on us. So that I'd have to say that our communication was excellent all along.

HACKMAN: You talked a little about the Kohler hearing. Is there anything more on that or specifically on the Perfect Circle [Company] hearings?

CONWAY: Well, no. The hearings are fairly, you know, the records and that sort of stuff are quite clear, and I don't think there's anything of great significance.

HACKMAN: What about the Gosser, Richard Gosser the UAW guy?

CONWAY: [Richard T.] Gosser. Now, that was the following year. That's a different thing. The thing that was very important though, during that year 1958, was that this was a big political year for the UAW. By this time, we were beginning to think about the future and where we were going and so on. And we had made some tactical decisions that it was important to get as many friendly, sympathetic governors elected as possible and that, of course, it being a non-presidential election year that the chances of improving the Senate and the House of Representatives were very good if we concentrated on particular races. This also was the year of the big right-wing push. Walter Reuther became the target of the right wing. Many of the campaigns around the country, the right wing of the Republican party attempted to make Walter Reuther the substitute candidate. This was also the year of the right to work push. So we had a number of major states, like Ohio and California, where the right to work thing went on the ballot. So it became a big political year for the labor movement but the UAW in particular.

So that all through the hearings and in the hours that we would spend together informally, we began to talk about some of these things, Bob and Ken and I in particular. Their curiosity about detail and how we worked in different states and areas of the country was more than the usual. I was personally convinced that what they were attempting to do was to feel out a potential alliance. I encouraged it, frankly, because I wanted to find out what was on their minds and they obviously wanted to do the same with us. So that all through that year those things were going on at the same time.

At some point, I'm not sure just exactly when it took place but Ken asked if I'd be willing to sit down with Jack Kennedy. So I said yes. I was staying in the Statler Hotel, I recall, and Ken called me up and said he'd come by and pick me up, he'd be in an old station wagon. We were going to have dinner out at Bobby's house in McLean. Apparently some time before that Bob and Jack had switched houses and Jack had moved in and was living at the N Street house. We would eat out at Bob's. And so Ken did pick me up. The only point in time I can fix this is it was right after the governors' conference that had taken place in Puerto Rico.

So, anyway there was a convergence of a number of things and it was very clear that this visit was a visit that was going to start off talking about some things but end up obviously talking about the presidency. That's the first time that we ever had that kind of discussion. Bob is the one who led into it and said, in effect, if we do make a decision to go at the 1960 convention we don't want to get caught in the position we were in in 1956. We don't want you on the opposite side from us. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: It was that conversation at Hickory Hill, I guess.

CONWAY: Yeah. That's right. As I say I don't know precisely when it was. I have the feeling it was in December, like December of '58 but the only event that I can tie it to is this governors' conference that had just been completed a short time before. Anyway we talked about the presidency, and I was convinced that Jack was going to run as a result of that meeting. I also was convinced, in my own mind, that I wanted to see him get elected.

I think this is probably the first time that we talked about what I now call the "megastate theory" which is that first of all, getting the nomination was one thing but winning the election was still another and that the way we had it figured out that he had to carry ten of fourteen states. Any combination of the ten would be generally sufficient to win. The big state theory was consistent with our own thinking. There were two states that we had no influence in that were big states: Texas and Florida. So we just made it clear that while we had active unions in Texas that they were such an insignificant part of the operation that we couldn't do anything there. Besides, with the Johnson method of operation, the UAW people in Texas were unreliable from a political point of view. And that we just didn't have enough in Florida to make any difference. Well, it became very clear to me that Florida was no particular problem to Jack because of his close personal ties to [George A.] Smathers, I just said, "Okay, those two states, there's no sense in our ever talking about." [Interruption]

HACKMAN: You were talking about Florida and you'd just mentioned Smathers.

CONWAY: Yeah. I knew of the personal relationship with Smathers and I accepted it as being something that Kennedy had and it

came out of their early years in the House together.

But when it comes to all of the others--California, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana--these are all states where the UAW had not only large numbers of membership but strong organization and considerable influence. The natural coalescence of interests in those in the 1960 election was obvious, and we talked about it at length at dinner that evening.

HACKMAN: Was O'Donnell present? Who was present at the meeting?

CONWAY: Yes.

HACKMAN: Just the three of them?

CONWAY: O'Donnell, Bob, Jack and me--just the four of us. It was quite business-like. Jack Kennedy and I and Ken arrived in separate cars within a matter of minutes of each other and we had a drink and then quickly sat down to dinner. We just stayed at the dinner table as long as several hours.

HACKMAN: Had you talked with Reuther about this?

CONWAY: No, no, not at this point.

HACKMAN: Are there any other people in the UAW who are getting involved with the Kennedys this early?

CONWAY: No, no, this was really the first. As I say, I left the meeting, at least I had made my mind up at that point and I knew my own task as far as the internal UAW was concerned. I then set about really to take care of that.

HACKMAN: Had there been any issues, votes that he had taken, positions that he had taken that were a concern with you that you brought out in the open at that point and that he satisfied?

CONWAY: Well, the only thing that concerned me during that 1958 year was that the Landrum-Griffin thing did develop. Meany was particularly offensive in one hearing in which he was pretty nasty to Jack Kennedy, said some things that were interpreted all around the labor movement as being anti-Kennedy and directed at the political 1960 situation.

But then, of course, when they got things messed up so badly, miscalculated and the Landrum-Griffin thing suddenly was on the front step, then it was necessary to put an operation together to salvage as much as possible. Of course, this was when Jack Kennedy came back into the picture in a positive role with Arthur Goldberg as the broker. Goldberg and [Andrew J.] Andy Biemiller tried to repair the damage. We were not directly involved in it, you know. Our feeling was that if they'd been tending to their knitting they wouldn't have gotten into the position that they were in. Now they were in it, too many cooks would spoil the soup and that the best thing for us to do was to stay back and rely on Arthur's ability to protect the general interests, our interests as well as everybody else's.

So in these discussions or anything that happened around these problems, Walter Reuther was very sympathetic to Jack Kennedy as a senator and as a key man on the [Senate] Labor Committee. But I don't know whether he had any inkling at this time of the possibility of being in a position where he was going to have to consider whether he could support Kennedy as a presidential candidate or not. As I say, he had, more than most people realized, a religious hangup. And he also had this earlier business of the Joe McCarthy thing and the negative feelings of people like Mrs. Roosevelt and Governor Lehman and some of the others.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you one thing before we go on with that. You mentioned the importance of the '58 races--congressional, governorship, whatever. Can you remember any discussions with them on who John Kennedy might campaign for in '58 or were there any requests like that or particular people you were interested in?

CONWAY: No I don't recall. The discussions were much more theoretical, and, as I say, we were deeply involved as a union in most of the major elections that year. It was just a combination of circumstances that produced these governorship races in these critical states, and we were successful in many of them. So that we ended up going into the 1960 convention with nine new Democratic governors in these critical states, all of whom we had worked very closely with in their elections. So it gave us a lot of openings.

HACKMAN: Yeah, well I sort of butted in on you while you were talking about Reuther.

CONWAY: Yeah. But in the case with Walter, Walter's method of operation always was to join the issues and not to talk about individuals until such time as he got fairly close to the conventions themselves. So, knowing this about Walter, it was not difficult at all for me to figure out what I should be doing

in bringing Jack Kennedy and Walter Reuther together as individuals. The first thing I did was to hit the civil rights thing. I set a meeting up with Jack Kennedy and Walter Reuther. The three of us met in his office and we talked about the whole question of civil rights and Jack's lack of visibility.

HACKMAN: Do you have any idea when this is?

CONWAY: Yes, I can pin it. I think it's the spring of '60. It could have even been '59. What we talked to him about was doing something, not only as far as legislation is concerned, but more publicly. He said at that time, I remember very clearly, he said, "the way I work in the Senate is that unless it's an area that I'm concentrating on myself, I rely on somebody else whose judgment I trust. And in the case of the civil rights bills and so on, I support what Hubert Humphrey supports. I take my keys from him."

Well, we pointed out a couple places where he didn't, and he got a little bit nervous at that point. He was a very thoughtful, quiet guy rocking in his rocking chair in his office. This was a time I got another insight into him about how his mind worked. He didn't come to a conclusion that we were right politically. His conclusion--and he stated it very sharply, all of a sudden he kind of leaned forward in his rocking chair and stood up, and he said, "All right." He said, "There's no question. The blacks are right." He might have used Negroes at that point. In other words, he came down on the Negroes' side of the question and he put the right there. And then he put himself there, and then he started to act.

The first thing that he did was to send [Myer] Mike Feldman and Sargent Shriver to the St. Paul-Minneapolis NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] convention. These guys, with a clear set of instructions, made quite an impact on that convention. And I began to get feedback from people like [Mildred] Millie Jeffrey and others, who were at the convention, that all of a sudden there was something new in the civil rights scene. Here were clear, articulate spokesmen for Jack Kennedy making very clear where he stood on these questions, and that was a new one.

The other one that developed at the same time is that we went in--again the same kind of setting--Walter Reuther and I went in and sat down with Kennedy maybe a month or so later, the time I don't know. We convinced him that he should take the leadership on the health care matter, that this was an issue that was going to build during the course of the 1960 election year. It was very important to an

awful lot of people in the labor unions, the old-timers in particular. He had to get a Kennedy health care bill in so that we could make the linkage with Aime Forand in the House and get it as the Kennedy-Forand bill. And, again, this was clearly a piece of the turf that Hubert Humphrey had staked out. So, without any discussion ever about anybody supporting anybody, Kennedy agreed that this was an area where he should be involved where he hadn't been. So he established that we should work directly with Mike Feldman and [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen, and I pulled in Leonard Lesser who was the health care expert that has worked with us in the UAW--worked with me personally for years--and we drafted the Kennedy bill that was put in.

HACKMAN: Now was there conversation on something like this with Humphrey? Did Humphrey know that you were talking with Kennedy about this legislation then . . .

CONWAY: No.

HACKMAN: . . . or where this came from?

CONWAY: We met with Humphrey all through this period, as we normally would do, on matters of concern and on issues. But we did not tell Humphrey that we were getting Kennedy to put in a Kennedy health bill. Now this is important to understand as far as Walter Reuther's style is concerned. On the issues, if you can get two spokesmen for the same issue you're better off than if you've got one and especially if you can get a new spokesman who brings to the issue battle a new set of troops and support. So, without there being any commitment to Kennedy as a presidential candidate, Walter Reuther's self-interest in this case was to get Kennedy on the line on the health bill. So that he felt that this was a perfectly proper thing to do.

The other thing that we were concerned about was that a Democratic convention can become a shambles if it's left in the hands of the dictatorial types like [Samuel T.] Sam Rayburn and so on. And we wanted to make sure there was no repeat of the 1956 and 1952 conventions. When the party is out of power, it is always difficult to give stability and guidance to the pre-convention period. And so we formed a kind of an informal crap game at that time and got each of the potential candidates to designate somebody that could, in effect, represent their interests. There were one or two other key figures that were involved. We had from the South, Camille Gravel. We had Paul Ziffren, who was then the national committeeman from California; [Herbert] Herb Waters from Humphrey; Ted Sorensen and Mike Feldman from. . . .

HACKMAN: Is this the group that a guy named [Kenneth M.] Ken Birkhead had some ties with?

CONWAY: No.

HACKMAN: No?

CONWAY: No, it's a totally different group. So that it was kind of understood that each of the candidates, when if they were candidates, could have input into this informal group. The only non-candidate or non-political party types who were a part of this was Leonard Woodcock and me, representing clearly the UAW. Everybody accepted that, and that's one of the reasons it was informal, it was non-official. This group met from time to time and talked about convention arrangements and who was going to be in charge of what. The appeal of Camille Gravel to have somebody from the South represented was made over and over again and listened to, and we finally came up with Leroy Collins as the choice and as the convention chairman. It turned out to be a stroke of genius because he was such a pleasant contrast with Sam Rayburn and the other types before that it worked out very well. We also worked on the committee chairmen. Chester Bowles was the choice of this group for the platform and so on.

BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I

CONWAY: . . . and so that, you know, it sort of had a kind of double responsibility.

There was no representative from Lyndon Johnson there, and the reason, very simple: he was not a candidate. Everybody knew he was, but until he behaved like a candidate he wasn't entitled to participate. And so that whole period of time Lyndon was playing his senatorial and congressional politics and his strategy for the convention was all laid out. He knew exactly what he was going to do and when. We had to, in a sense, anticipate that.

Now these meetings were taking place all through the period of time that the primaries were being held. The method of operation was, as far as the UAW was concerned, that we were neutral. We had no choice, no favorite. This was an official policy. So my job was to kind of oversee this and to make sure that we maintained our neutrality. I conveyed this to Bob and Ken so that they knew exactly what the situation was.

In the Wisconsin primary our regional director, Harvey Kitzman, was a long-time personal friend of Hubert Humphrey. And he just kept

saying that he couldn't live with himself and remain neutral and that he had to support Humphrey. So I kept taking this problem to Reuther and saying, in effect, you can't let him, you know, be a one-sided UAW presence for Hubert Humphrey. If you can get him to agree that if we let him come out for Humphrey that the people who want to come out for Kennedy are free to do so. . . . And he agreed to that. Without ever changing our policy, then I became his counterpart in the sense that anytime he would do something for Humphrey, I was free to do something for Kennedy.

HACKMAN: In fact if I remember though, right after Kitzman made an endorsement, Walter Reuther made a statement of official UAW neutrality.

CONWAY: Right. Yeah. In other words Kitzman made a local endorsement and Reuther made a public statement, in effect, saying that our position was one of neutrality.

HACKMAN: Did you at that point attempt to bring anyone along with you as a balance?

CONWAY: No, no, it wasn't necessary. That's my region and so I know everybody over there. I also knew where the other regional director, [Robert] Bob Johnston was. By this time I was feeling people out and had a fairly good idea where we were going to end up. Martin Gerber, surprisingly enough, turned out to be for Kennedy, although he very embarrassingly introduced Kennedy to his regional conference and had a Freudian slip. He introduced him as Senator McCarthy. Everybody was stunned. He corrected himself, but you could see what was on his mind. I felt [Charles] Charlie Kerrigan would be with us, although Charlie was such a hard-nosed political guy that I was very cautious in how I sounded him out. I knew where Woodcock stood, I knew where [Kenneth] Bannon stood, I knew where Fraser stood.

HACKMAN: Where did they stand?

CONWAY: They were thinking along the same lines that I was--that we needed a fresh face and that we needed somebody like Kennedy.

HACKMAN: Millie Jeffrey?

CONWAY: Millie, Millie came along about the same time, that's right. We turned all kinds of things loose in Wisconsin through the Kenosha local and through [Gerald] Gerry Bruno

and others. Then when the Wisconsin primary was over, this had a great deal of effect on Walter. He then said, "What we now have to do is to begin to get ourselves in a position where we can pull this thing together. And so in order to be able to do this we have to give each guy the opportunity to support the guy he wants to, but with the clear understanding that at the convention, when it becomes clear where the thing was going to fall, that we would go as a unit." And so we had another meeting of our board and our neutrality position was extended to this kind of an operational position. That left Teddy Hawkes, who was the regional director in Missouri to be free to support [Stuart] Symington. It left the guy in Texas to support either Symington or Johnson. It left the New England guys free to go for Kennedy. It left the people who were still for Stevenson to go for him. It left the people who were with Humphrey to go with Humphrey, and so on. It also gave us the first reading as to how people felt. It became clear that all the power guys that I worked with, my whole team of guys, were all in one place. So then it was a simple internal management problem from that point on.

Walter maintained his neutrality as far as the public posture was concerned. He somehow felt that it would be possible to put together a Humphrey-Kennedy ticket. I think all along he thought that Humphrey would be the front guy and that Kennedy, since he had expressed an interest in the vice presidency in '56, would be a strong addition to a Humphrey ticket; that you could have a guy who was a Catholic as a vice presidential candidate but you couldn't have him out in front. All these reasonings were going through Walter's mind.

So that we were able to adopt an operating strategy which gave us maximum working leverage, particularly in the caucus and convention states where it was possible to have UAW people become strategically placed in the delegations. I knew in New Jersey, for example, that Governor [Robert B.] Meyner would present problems. I knew his wife from the Stevenson period and so on. So we worked with people in New Jersey, and we got delegates coming out of our ears. It was all the bargaining process. . . .

HACKMAN: Who in New Jersey were you working with?

CONWAY: Martin Gerber and [Ed] Eddie Gray and local union guys and so on, other CIO unions particularly. When the crunch came during the convention, I think the vote was something like thirty-three to one to move to Kennedy with Meyner, you know, standing with his finger in the dike trying to hold everything back. It was our guys that precipitated the whole thing. We knew we could do it at any time, and it was just a question of when. I give that

as an example. The Kansas delegation was a fifteen member delegation and the balance of power was our guy, Mack Lee, who was the eighth guy who was prepared to go for Kennedy. It was this kind of thing that we were putting together around the country. All of these things were working kind of on their own without ever being really tied together.

HACKMAN: But as these things would break, let's say the eight to seven balance in Kansas, would you or someone touch base with O'Donnell?

CONWAY: That's right. Ken O'Donnell and I were in constant touch with each other and Bobby, too. They would call up and say, "This is what's happening. What do you know about it?" We'd compare notes and we'd act off an agreed-upon strategy. We called a meeting of all of our retirees in the Detroit area right after the Wisconsin primary, immediately before I guess it was. Yes, it was immediately before.

HACKMAN: Ten days before the Wisconsin primary. I've got March 28.

CONWAY: Well, yeah. Whether it was ten days or not I don't know. But anyway we invited Symington, Kennedy and Humphrey. By this time my role is getting a little sticky because my wife is for Humphrey, and I'm for Kennedy, although I'm not publicly for Kennedy, and so on. Joe Rauh is our lawyer before the McClellan committee. By this time we're in the Gosser thing, that's, you know, a different business going on. Anyway, I had the peculiar personal problem at that time of kind of getting caught on my own hook. Humphrey was running out of money, wasn't doing very well in Wisconsin, and it was clear that the guy I was with was emerging as the presidential caliber guy. So I ended up cooperating on a fund-raiser for Humphrey.

HACKMAN: Pledged one hundred and fifty dollars.

CONWAY: Yeah, and we raised enough money for his state-wide television thing that was to be put on the night before, I guess Saturday or Sunday before the election.

This was all done during the day that we had the meeting at the fair-grounds. That's why I tie the two things together. We raised over five thousand dollars in that particular session with these people. This was the first exposure to the UAW people in the Detroit area of these various candidates. By this time we had worked out a strategy. [Pat] Greathouse introduced Humphrey wherever he went,

because he was a Humphrey supporter. Somebody, I forget who it was, introduced Symington--that was unimportant. And Leonard Woodcock, we got to introduce Jack Kennedy. To be perfectly frank with you, the speech that Leonard made in introducing Jack Kennedy was better than the speech that Kennedy made after he was introduced. The effect on the people who were there was as much a Woodcock effect as it was a Kennedy effect. That was really the first time I saw Kennedy make a speech. While he was very personable at this point in his life and while he makes a fairly good street speech and so on, in formal settings he wasn't nearly as good as he later became. But he made a good impression at that old-timers meeting.

This was a warm up for our convention, which came a little bit later on. We invited the same people to speak to the convention. By this time, I'm concerned about the fact that we're going to be giving a national exposure to delegates from all over the country. I know Humphrey and I know how well our guys react to him. So I made the decision to get Kennedy in there first. So we got agreement. They resisted, Jack and Bob resisted. I convinced O'Donnell that the thing to do is to get Kennedy in even though he wasn't going to have the best spot on the convention, to get him in and get him out, because when Hubert came he'd take the convention and he did. So Jack made a good speech. It read well, it came out better. He got a good reception. This was the first time most of our guys had seen him. Then, of course, all my friends turned on the steam the other way when Humphrey came--as I say, including my wife and our lawyer, Joe Rauh, and others. They organized for a Humphrey reception, and he got a tremendous reception as we expected. He also gives the kind of stem-winding speech and he talks to our guys in the way that, you know, it's like somebody belongs. He just made such a clear impression that was superior to Kennedy's that I was a little worried about it, but not too much. Symington made a good speech, but wasn't obviously going to go any place with our guys.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you on the timing. Now you're talking about the spring of 1960.

CONWAY: Uh uhm.

HACKMAN: This is the Atlantic City convention, right?

CONWAY: Yeah.

HACKMAN: And the date I had was October '59, so one of us is off.

CONWAY: Well the spring meeting was. . . . No, it must have been earlier, it couldn't have been October.

HACKMAN: No, this is '59, not '60. You were talking about this following the Wisconsin primary.

CONWAY: Was it October, '59? Is that the UAW convention? October '59?

HACKMAN: I don't know where I got that so I can't swear by it.

CONWAY: That's probably right. Some of these things then I've gotten in '59, I've been thinking of them as having been in '60 but actually they would have been. . . .

HACKMAN: Maybe we can try it like this. Someone was telling me that in this one which I take to be October '59, when John Kennedy came in early, you arranged for him to come in early, that the night before he spoke there were cocktails at which you were there--I don't know whether Reuther was there. But someone told me that this speech made a positive impression on Reuther as being a substantive speech and showed a lot of hard work, which he hadn't maybe expected from John Kennedy from previous experience with him.

CONWAY: All right, so what I've got is the convention and the old-timers' meeting reversed. The convention was in October '59, the old-timers' meeting was in March of '60.

HACKMAN: Right, right, I think that's right.

CONWAY: So that the rerun of the same candidates was in the old-timers' meeting. And, by that time, Kennedy made a much more positive impression on the UAW people.

HACKMAN: Right, right, okay.

CONWAY: At the convention he gave a substantive speech and the substantive speech did make an impression on Reuther. Yeah, that's right, that's the way it was.

HACKMAN: Can I skip back on just a couple of things? You talked about Pat McNamara giving you the education on Johnson's techniques in the Senate. You said you didn't see his hand directly in the McClellan committee but maybe there was some on Landrum-Griffin. Is there anything that stands out particularly on that?

CONWAY: No, I just think that Johnson was aware all along what was going to happen and let it happen, because Johnson's

labor record was lousy. So I think that he was a part of the larger design. McClellan got on the elevator one time during the hearings and said to me, he said, "You guys are spending an awful lot of time in these hearings when you really ought to be over there in the Senate, because we're about ready to take you to the cleaners over there." So it was a straight notice, you know. And I said, "Well, I wish I could but my job is to tend to these hearings."

HACKMAN: Yeah, now you mentioned when I talked with you on the phone a couple of weeks ago about the call to yourself and Walter Reuther in Brussels from Johnson.

CONWAY: I was going to get to that.

HACKMAN: Had there been contacts earlier, though, than that? Was Johnson in the fall of '59 or very early '60 making any feelers at all or just any kind of attempts?

CONWAY: Well, not directly. The one thing that happened, I don't know when we had this but at one point, probably '58, we had this big unemployed march that George Meany and Walter Reuther had such a difference of opinion about. It ended up with the meeting, instead of being an open air meeting, taking place in the Armory. Lyndon Johnson was invited to come and speak to that and he made the only good speech in the whole day and really put himself into it and when it was all over hadn't said anything, just said he was going to form a committee. Everybody cheered when he said he was going to form a committee, and he got the hell out of there. But he did make quite a passionate speech. You'd of thought that he really bled for the unemployed and so on. But that's about the only thing I associate with his efforts to keep his fences mended. No, he was playing the game very close to the belt as far as his presidential thing was concerned.

HACKMAN: You mentioned also Reuther's hesitation on the religious issue. Can you remember the Kennedys ever putting forward any of the work that Sorensen had done in '56 or the so-called [John M.] Bailey memoranda on the religious vote or anything?

CONWAY: No. I knew of its existence because we had talked about it. But I don't think I ever read it and it was never a part of Reuther's deliberation.

HACKMAN: At this point, let's say late '59 and early '60, what kind of information were you getting from the Meany camp about what Meany was thinking about 1960, through Goldberg or

through whoever, or is there much information?

CONWAY: No, not very clear. I think Goldberg. . . . I can put it. Goldberg was pro-Kennedy fairly early but that his union wasn't necessarily. Didn't know where [David J.] McDonald stood. The Goldberg approach to keeping the election out of the McClellan committee thing was openly political and Ken would say things like, "Hell, these guys will do anything to keep from having that election." And then [Philip] Phil Reagan was the singing cop, do you remember him? He was also a very close associate of Bobby and Jack Kennedy. So that, you know, there were people in the steelworker [United Steelworkers of America] camp that they had pretty constant touch with. But as far as the AFL-CIO and George Meany is concerned, I don't recall any particular straws in the wind or any feelings about it. Except I had the feeling that Meany was anti-Kennedy.

HACKMAN: We hadn't really talked in any detail about the Gosser hearing and is there any direct contact with the Kennedys at that point?

CONWAY: Well, they were very much involved. The Gosser hearings took place, I guess, in '59. They were of a different breed. They were largely getting at what was considered to be some form of corruption in the UAW. And they picked the Achilles' heel when they picked Gosser because of his personal methods of operation, his personal conduct. He was just an old-timer who'd been in prison a few times and his ethics were influenced by that earlier experience. As far as UAW was concerned, he was an honorable man. He conducted himself quite well in the UAW. But we had a political caucus fund. We called it the flower fund. Staff members would contribute into this political fund a certain amount of money each month. Then it was out of that that we financed our politics, we didn't use union money. In a sense we were clean, but, at the same time, we collected political contributions like a vacuum sweeper in the sense that we got everybody. If you had the kind of thing erupt as you did in Toledo where a factional situation developed, some of the dissidents who were let go from the staff became the sources of information to the minority staff member whose name you mentioned earlier, McGovern I guess his name was, about how our political funds operated and so on. They made what, in effect, was a mountain out of a molehill. It was a much more difficult defensive job that we had there, because we had some personalities that were, to say the least, not the best witnesses that we could put forth. We got out of it all right, but that's about all. It tarnished us a

little bit, but nothing serious.

All through this, of course, Gosser began to get paranoid, thinking that there was all kinds of conspiracies. He was in constant touch with Jimmy Hoffa who was the subject of the committee's work and Bobby Kennedy's relentless pursuit. So Gosser became a very hostile individual, quite paranoid, and had to be dealt with in that regard. Fortunately, as far as the Ohio situation was concerned, the political decisions were made by the Ohio state body and the key guy that was the president of that was [Patrick J.] Pat O'Malley and he was a UAW regional director in Cleveland. So we had access to the decision-making apparatus through him. Two of the three regional directors, Ray Ross and Pat O'Malley, were both pro-Kennedy, and Gosser really had no place to go. The politics of that situation, this was an internal problem that we had.

Anyway, after the Wisconsin primary there were two things that came up. First of all, we were concerned about California. We were concerned about the way the delegation would go and we were concerned about Stevenson being the front for an LBJ effort. I was more concerned about this than Walter Reuther. Walter Reuther was not inclined to think that Lyndon was going to be a candidate at that point.

Paul Schrade was on our staff, and Paul was a Stevenson man. I took it on myself to convince Paul that Stevenson couldn't be elected if nominated and that it was time to change. Because of my long-time personal friendship with Paul I convinced him, and he took it more on that basis than he did on belief. He didn't really see Kennedy at that time. I think Paul was not concerned about the religious thing very much. He was much more concerned about the McCarthy associations and the earlier thing. He had fairly deep reservations about Jack Kennedy, and I think that they reflected what was the official Stevenson-liberal line on Kennedy. But Paul did come around and he did become very valuable in the convention and afterwards. He was not regional director at the time.

The other thing is that once the Wisconsin primary was over, Walter's attitude towards Jack Kennedy changed in the sense that he saw for the first time a guy who did have the potential to get nominated. He began to look at Hubert differently, because the contrast between Hubert and Kennedy on the primary there was clear. I kept bringing this to Walter's attention, that Hubert ran like he was running for sheriff and that Kennedy like he was running for president and there was a hell of a difference and that this shouldn't be overlooked. Walter was convinced that Hubert would beat Kennedy in West Virginia. And when the reverse happened, it broke the Humphrey spirit,

and Walter, for the first time, recognized that Kennedy could go all the way. So he raised the possibility. . . . No this was before, this was before West Virginia. He raised the possibility that we might be able to get Hubert to drop. He asked me to check out with Jack Kennedy if it was agreeable with him if we talked to Hubert, see if we could get him out of the West Virginia primary. I did this over the telephone. Kennedy was agreeable provided we would protect him and not give Hubert any indication that we had checked it out with him or that he approved of the idea.

So with that proviso, Walter and I met with Humphrey. We spent two or three hours in his office at night and, ultimately, Humphrey drove us to the airport. In the course of this, we tried to get him out of the West Virginia primary and we tried to convince him that he couldn't make it and get the nomination. He resisted; was very strong in his resistance. So we dropped it. Then, of course, when he was defeated in the West Virginia he announced that he was getting out.

At this point Walter's whole thinking had reversed and he felt that if Jack Kennedy were going to be the nominee that we had to begin to face this question of the religious thing and we also had to face the question of the disaffection of the liberals from Kennedy. So in his mind he reversed the roles and he saw Humphrey as a running mate for Kennedy. So we began then to talk to Jack Kennedy about this possibility. Kennedy agreed that he would like to have Hubert as a running mate but he says, "You fellows have far better communication with him than I do, because right now we're not talking to each other very much. You know, he's kind of bruised and battered." So Walter set about the task of trying to get the thing structured so that this could come together. The guy he worked on most was Joe Rauh, to get Joe Rauh convinced that Jack Kennedy would make a good candidate. And Joe came around. Joe then was a very important bridge to Hubert and to some of Hubert's closest advisers.

We made several efforts to meet with Hubert but he wouldn't meet with us. He went up to the farm and stayed there. Joe was able to get through to him on the telephone and talk with him, but he just was sulking.

So she was, in that emotional period, having more of an influence on Hubert than anybody else. So we just did not make any contact with him. Couldn't. Finally, Hubert passed the word back that he'd meet us at the convention in Los Angeles and we kind of set a tentative date. Then we stopped making these efforts.

In the meantime, Walter and I went to Europe. Before I left I

sat down with Ken and Bob and we went over state by state, counted all the delegates. There were still a few coming in, but the great bulk of them were there. It was clear that we could have it on the first ballot. So I went to Europe with this knowledge. While we were there, Walter and I had a chance to talk about a lot of things, and we talked about some of these problems that he anticipated in the election, particularly the religious thing. He kept saying to me, "You just don't understand, Jack, how deep this is, the anti-Catholicism in the country. You grew up in a Catholic neighborhood as a Catholic kid, so you have a different view of this than those of us who come out of the Protestant Bible Belt part of the country. And while it's true that Kennedy can within partisan Democrats get a majority in a primary, he's going to have great difficulty getting people to vote for him in these areas when there's a choice, the choice being a Richard Nixon and a Jack Kennedy. It's a much deeper problem than you think it is." So we had a chance to talk about those kinds of things and this is when he kept developing the theory that what we needed was to match up Humphrey and Kennedy on a ticket.

We also knew that Johnson was beginning to get upset because he could see what was happening. He was trying to build his legislative record and all of his connections and pass out his favors and so on before the convention, announce that he was a candidate and then go sweeping in and pick up all the chips. He sent Justice [William O.] Douglas to talk with Walter, to convince Walter that Lyndon Johnson would be the best president. He sent Eliot Janeway to talk with Walter and [Robert] Bob Oliver who had been a long-time colleague of Walter's in the CIO. So that Walter was aware of the fact that Johnson was going to make a move.

When we went to Brussels, the thing that was about to happen was that Kennedy was going into Michigan to do something with Senator [Philip A.] Hart and Governor [G. Mennen] Williams. At this particular occasion, Mennen Williams chose to announce himself in support of Jack Kennedy. Apparently this leaked out and Lyndon Johnson picked it up. That's when he started to call frantically to get Walter Reuther to stop this from happening. I remember on the other end of the phone Walter at one point saying, "Well, I don't know why you're so upset about this, Lyndon. You're not a candidate." And there was a long silence. Lyndon even then wouldn't say that he was a candidate. So what happened is that Williams did do this. Then Johnson did make his announcement. Then it turned out that there were three or four people on the Michigan delegation who were Johnson supporters, and we didn't know who the hell they were. It turned out that they were black and Hobart Taylor was one of them, the guy from Grand Rapids.

Well, anyway we went into the convention and the script was just as we had projected it. By this time there was a powerful stop-Kennedy move. Johnson was a part of it, [Eugene J.] Gene McCarthy was a part of it, Hubert Humphrey was a part of it, Stevenson was dragged in, Mrs. Roosevelt, Governor Lehman, the whole works, all the people that Walter had had some contact with over the years.

HACKMAN: Let me butt in just a second. [Interruption] We were just starting to go into the convention, but I'd like to back up and run through a few things. I had heard that just after the Wisconsin primary Sorensen came out and visited the UAW offices and met with yourself, Woodcock, Fraser, Millie Jeffrey, I don't know if Reuther was around. Can you remember anything particular that transpired there?

CONWAY: I don't remember what transpired. Mike Feldman came out, Ted Sorensen came out. By this time these relationships were surfacing. Sorensen came to Detroit, if I recall, in connection with our informal convention arrangement thing. By this time these concerns were quite hot--you know, who was going to be what at the convention and so on--and that could very well have been the occasion for Sorensen's trip.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any kind of agreement that John Kennedy would stay out of Michigan physically until a certain point being reached in conversations with Sorensen?

CONWAY: Well, I think that there probably was a discussion that we would. I don't know when we agreed to that or whether Sorensen came and made an independent check, but we took the responsibility for putting the Michigan delegation together and said in effect it would be much better if we did it rather than to have somebody try to put it together from the outside. So that decision was made. It could very well have been made or confirmed during that visit.

HACKMAN: What kind of relationship did you and Reuther and the other UAW leaders have with Mennen Williams in the fall of '59 and early '60 as he was sort of deciding whether he wants to run or what he's going to do about another governorship term or the Senate or whatever?

CONWAY: Well, that's a long story because it goes back to the '52 and '56 conventions. Williams always wanted to be the head of the delegation and he always ended up supporting the wrong guy personally. So in the two previous conventions we had had to take the delegation away from him. So there was a lot of hard

feelings and distrust between Williams and us. Walter and Williams did not have a very good relationship. Leonard and Williams did. Doug was much more the practical political guy. Woodcock was the spokesman for the UAW in Democratic party politics in Michigan. He was the recognized spokesman from inside the UAW and also accepted generally by the people in the Democratic party. So we always left these things to Leonard because he did them well and his ability to communicate with Williams was much better than Reuther's. In the '52 convention, Williams had gotten involved in an effort to nominate [W. Averell] Harriman and we supported Stevenson. Was that Harriman, was it '52 or '56?

HACKMAN: Right, '56.

CONWAY: '56. I forget who he was supporting in '52, but it was not Stevenson. We had a long session, just a brutal session in the convention hotel or our hotel in the '56 convention to convince Williams that he couldn't do what he wanted to do. In each case it was necessary to have Leonard, in effect, take the governor on and take the delegation away from him. So that we were concerned about a repetition of the same thing, I think Williams was. At a certain point, when he concluded Kennedy was a logical guy, he wanted to get on the bandwagon for his own reasons. I think he probably was being convinced by [Neil] Staebler that he'd make an ideal vice presdential guy or this, that, or the other thing. And that's the reason he made his move at this dedication ceremony. In our particular case it didn't go contrary to our own interests. So we let him go ahead, although we thought it was grandstanding and we thought maybe it would give us some problems a little bit later on, and it turned out it did.

HACKMAN: This is in terms of Williams's announcement at Mackinac Island that he was for Kennedy. I had heard Reuther was upset about that.

CONWAY: Well the thing is that we thought it was grandstanding, that here we were following a policy in which we were going into the convention uncommitted and here was this guy making a public announcement that he was for Kennedy and that this complicated our operation. It was not inconsistent with our objective, but it complicated our operation. So that I think Walter was upset, but he would be upset by anything that Williams did of that kind because he didn't like him. He didn't think too much of him. I don't know whether that's a fair way of putting it or not. But that's what triggered Johnson's action. I think Walter was upset by Williams for doing it because of that kind of thing, creating that kind of problem.

HACKMAN: Do you recall any conversations that Reuther had with John Kennedy or any of his representatives about Reuther's whole focus on party realignment in this period which is something he was speaking about fairly frequently, the dropping of southern Democrats or the conservatives?

CONWAY: Yeah. Well, we, of course, were following that course because we felt until it happened that the Democratic party was going to be an ineffective party and Lyndon Johnson represented, you know, the worst of the Democratic party, the southern bloc dominating the Congress, the committee chairmen, the whole stranglehold that the southern bloc had, the Dixiecrats and so on. We'd been fighting this for a decade. There was some, you know, from time to time discussion but never precisely on that that I can recall. We just assumed that time would work in our favor if we could elect a president and gradually bring about the changes.

HACKMAN: I had also heard that Robert Kennedy was intentionally kept out of many personal contacts with labor leaders around the country who were resentful of Robert Kennedy. Is that something that's operating within the UAW structure at this point?

CONWAY: Well, there was some hostility there to Bob because of the sharp role that he played as the prosecutor, so to speak. Bob was frequently less diplomatic than Jack was. So people began to make the transition to support of Jack Kennedy, and, if they still had a political problem or an emotional problem or something, they had a tendency to say, "Well, Jack is this, but Bobby's a son of a bitch." You know, it was that kind of a. . . . Like cream and milk separates, I think that process was going on in people's minds at that point.

HACKMAN: Did you ever have any trouble communicating with Robert Kennedy? A lot of people said, you know, he's hard to deal with or difficult to talk to.

CONWAY: No. We were completely open. Bob wasn't as quick as Jack, and he didn't have the same kind of intellectual steel-trap reaction to things. Bob's conclusions were frequently based on, you know, feeling and emotion as well as the intellectual. So that you talked things through. There was a lot of strong give and take between Bob and me. We never fought in the sense that, you know, people who are antagonists would fight, but neither of us ever backed for the other and the result was that we had a very intense personal relationship and respect for each other. But I had no difficulty talking and communicating with Bob.

HACKMAN: You said that you had talked personally with Humphrey to try to get him to withdraw . . .

CONWAY: Yeah.

HACKMAN: . . . after Wisconsin and after West Virginia but what . . .

CONWAY: We abandoned that because . . .

HACKMAN: Right, right. What about with Stevenson? Were there personal conversations with Stevenson while you were . . .

CONWAY: Yes, eventually, yes. That took place at the convention. Stevenson was a non-candidate all through this period. He was the guy that Jack was concerned about most because of the pull that he had with a lot of people. Had Stevenson become a candidate much earlier he would have upset the ball game, no doubt about it. Kennedy knew that and that was his biggest concern.

But Stevenson was kind of aloof and remote at this time. It was in like late May and June that the stop-Kennedy movement really got serious. It was masterminded, I'm sure, by Lyndon. You could begin to see the strings being pulled as Lyndon wound down the regular session and made provision for the special session, setting the stage for, you know, all of the power plays that he had contemplated making and then announcing his candidacy and roaring into Los Angeles as a declared candidate with a bandwagon effect building. There was nothing that happened that changed our count but there was a lot that happened at the convention that changed our behavior because we had to. . . .

First thing we tried to do was to make the connection with Humphrey and to get him lined up as a potential vice presidential candidate. That aborted. The reason it aborted is that Joe Rauh must have communicated in some way to Muriel what we had in mind. The result was that, as I say, Humphrey wouldn't talk with us. He came to the convention two days later than he had planned, so that we lost very valuable time. When he did come, he didn't meet with us. He met with Lyndon Johnson instead. We sent Joe Rauh and Marvin Rosenberg to Humphrey's suite when he did get there and they wouldn't let him in. It got pretty tense because [Patrick] Pat O'Connor had tried to rough Joe Rauh up and throw him out of the room. That's when Joe went up first. Marvin Rosenberg, when he heard about this, was so upset that he went up. Of course, they treated Marvin differently because he was Hubert's fundraiser. It was at this point that we recognized that all of the time that Humphrey was putting us off, he was meeting with Lyndon Johnson. That's when, I'm sure, the whole stakeout was being made. We were fighting against a decision on Hubert's part to become a part

of the stop-Kennedy movement, which meant that he couldn't be dealing with us and Jack Kennedy on the vice presidential thing.

HACKMAN: But some people had said that early on, when [James H. Jr.] Jim Rowe was involved in Humphrey's campaign, that that seemed like a Johnson tie that early. Was that something?

CONWAY: I think so and felt that all along, but at that point Johnson wasn't a candidate. But Jim Rowe and Bob Oliver and Pat O'Connor, these are all guys that tie into the Johnson-Bobby Baker operation.

So anyway the thing never came off with Humphrey. We met with Don Fraser and Geri Joseph, who were the heads of the delegation. We tried to convince them that they should get Humphrey to make a move in Kennedy's favor and that there was a clear commitment to the vice presidency if he did it. But they reported back to us that it was not feasible. It was at this point that Kennedy then. . . . We said, "Okay." He gave us, I think, a Monday night deadline, that had to be put together by then or we couldn't hold on any longer. We agreed to that. And the result was an unrealistic thing for us to have expected anyway. So that when Monday night came and passed, why the Humphrey thing was over. So then we began to concentrate on other things.

Walter Reuther met with Adlai Stevenson, met with Mrs. Roosevelt, met with Herbert Lehman, met with [Thomas K.] Tom Finletter, all of these in an effort to get them to recognize that Jack Kennedy was going to be the nominee and that we should put the thing together in such a way that we could eradicate the liberal hostility and do something which would strengthen the ticket and reduce the religious factor. That was essentially what Walter's. . . . We met with the guy [Michael] Mike Monroney who was Stevenson's campaign manager. We did not meet with Gene McCarthy. [Robert S.] Bob Kerr got into the race, if you recall, and this was all part of the same oil and gas effort to support Lyndon Johnson.

And then, of course, the actual convention itself and the voting and so on--the only place we were off was the District [of Columbia] delegation. It split into three pieces instead of going on a majority basis. So it didn't cast its vote. The Kansas vote, which was an eight to seven split with our guy as the swing man, passed. And it passed because we had been double-crossed by our regional director, Teddy Hawks, who instructed the guy not to move. We agreed that we would make all our moves on the first ballot so that we threw everything into it. That's when we blew the lid off the New Jersey delegation and so on. Everything worked exactly as we planned it except

for that one Kansas thing. It wasn't Mack Lee's fault. He was under strict instructions from Teddy Hawks, counter to what we had agreed to. So instead of its being settled with the Washington vote it was settled with the Wyoming vote and it was over.

HACKMAN: Was there every any possibility before the convention that Reuther would announce openly for John Kennedy?

CONWAY: No, that's not the style. We'd perfected our method of operation. We stuck right with it and never did make any kind of a public announcement, although it was generally understood that that's where we were going.

HACKMAN: I have read or heard somewhere that I suppose the convention, a few days before the convention started, Walter Reuther met with several other major labor leaders and they agreed to work at the convention for John Kennedy but there was no public announcement, I believe. I don't know who those people are.

CONWAY: Well, I'll tell you exactly what it was. We constituted an informal committee. It was made up of Alex Rose, Arthur Goldberg representing the Steelworkers, Walter Reuther, Joe Keenen and me. That was the five. We met every day, two or three times a day all through the convention. This was agreed to by George Meany, and [James B.] Jimmy Carey, who was for Symington, and David Dubinsky and others. It was kind of generally accepted that this group would be the informal coordinators, not putting any muscle on anybody. It was to be by persuasion and so on. This remained until after the election of Kennedy.

At the point that Johnson was selected as the vice president, Meany was so outraged that he was persuaded by Walter Reuther to call a meeting of the executive council that evening (around 7:30 PM). All executive council members who were present in Los Angeles were called to a meeting. It was a bruising kind of meeting in which Meany ranted and raved and just cursed Kennedy for this and, you know, wanted to have the council take an action that would disassociate the labor movement from Kennedy and from the nomination and all that sort of stuff. It took hours to bleed the emotion off. Walter really did it almost entirely as a one-man operation. I think the council met for the better part of three hours. The feeling was very deep at that point. The decision to pick Lyndon Johnson was a kind of a shattering one on everybody. That's a story in itself.

That committee, that five member committee still operated the following day. We met with Jack Kennedy in his room. We were one of the first groups to come in. There was not much of a build-up

of tension and people. We went in--it was fairly early, I don't know, 8:30, 9:00. . . .

HACKMAN: Is Goldberg present at this meeting? Do you remember?

CONWAY: We were supposed to meet in our suite and go over together. Goldberg didn't show up. So the four of us went over and Goldberg met us there. He had been with [David L.] Dave Lawrence and Dave McDonald and they had endorsed the Johnson thing privately without ever telling us. Arthur was, you know, as I say I always refer to him as a broker. He's a marriage-maker, a broker; he's not a team man. He's always. . . . [Interruption] I suppose this is just as good a place to stop as any.

HACKMAN: Okay. We can go through the vice presidential thing. . . .