

James L. Sundquist Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 9/13/1965
Administrative Information

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James L. Sundquist (1915-2016) was a member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) Platform Committee (1960); a member of John F. Kennedy (JFK)'s Presidential campaign staff (1960); and the Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture (1963-1965). This interview focuses on Sundquist's role in the creation of the 1960 Democratic Party platform, the liberal nature of the platform, and difficulties encountered in passing legislation related to the platform, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

JAMES L. SUNDQUIST

September 13, 1965
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey and Ronald J. Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

SUNDQUIST: I first became associated with the platform operation shortly after Chester Bowles was appointed Chairman. Philip Perlman had been named vice chairman. And someone, Charlie Murphy I believe, suggested to Bowles that he pick me up as the secretary of the Committee, which he did. That put me more or less in charge of the detail of the assembly of the platform. At the same time that I came aboard, Bill Welsh [William B. Welsh], who at that time was working for Senator Hart [Philip A. Hart], also joined the group, and shortly after that Milton Gwirtzman, who I believe was on Senator Symington's [Stuart Symington] staff, and later on the staff of Senator Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] of Massachusetts. Bowles also brought down Abram Chayes, who subsequently became Legal Adviser in the State Department. We became the pre-Convention brain trust that put together the various platform planks.

Bowles himself took a very strong interest in certain parts of the platform, particularly the international and the civil rights sections. However, he had the idea that the platform could be written in three thousand words, and he had dictated that much himself so he really wasn't looking to the staff to add very much. We were convinced, however, that there were many, many things which had to be said which couldn't be put in three thousand words, so we began accumulating materials even though the chairman hadn't given us any license to do so.

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The materials were assembled primarily from the legislative record of the liberal wing of the Democratic party, and we relied for draftmanship either on the committee staffs or on the staffs of the key senators of the liberal bloc. Another participant was Dick Wallace [Richard D. Wallace], who was the public relations director of the Democratic Advisory Council. Chayes, Wallace, and I spent full-time during most of June in an office in the building on the corner of Connecticut and L Streets formerly occupied by the Arthur Murray Dance Studio, and the others on the staff came in from time to time.

In this hot barn of a place we ground out the first draft of the platform about two weeks before we went to Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Mr. Bowles was working on his three thousand words, and the problem was how to dovetail the two. We had one showdown session with Mr. Bowles in which we -- meaning the staff -- took the view that a three thousand word platform was impossible. It left out most of the usual planks directed toward various special interests. We could visualize a Republican speaker before an American Legion convention waving their platform on veterans' affairs, and then holding up a blank sheet and saying, "This is the Democratic platform." We probably all at that time overrated the importance of platforms, but, in any event, Bowles was adamant. All we could get him to agree upon was that there would be a part one of the platform, which was his three thousand words which he expected to read before the convention, and then there could be a part two which would include all the other material. He did not regard these two sections as being of equal status and equally binding. It was his idea that the "platform" proper would have to be part one only because otherwise how would it be presented to and adopted by the Convention? The staff, on the other hand, began taking for granted that the two parts would be of equal status. I might add that Phil Perlman was on our side -- in fact, everybody was on our side including Chester Bowles' congressional staff, headed by Tom Hughes [Thomas L. Hughes], even though we got nowhere with Bowles himself.

In any event, about two weeks before the Convention was to convene -- ten days might be closer -- we went to Los Angeles and took over a suite of rooms in the Biltmore. We added to our staff Dick Murphy [Richard J. Murphy], the later Assistant Postmaster General, who at that time was head of the Young Democrats operation in the National Committee headquarters. Dick had been

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responsible for organizing a series of regional platform hearings that Chairman Butler [Paul Butler] of the National Committee thought would be a good attention-getting device as well as a means of cementing relationships between the party and various groups that wanted to be heard. Dick had possession of the record of all that testimony, and specific recommendations had been abstracted for us. At the Biltmore, I put Dick in charge of the mechanics of the hearings and the security of the platform operation while Welsh, Gwirtzman, Chayes and I began polishing up the prose. Bowles' three thousand words were by this time complete and very eloquent and the movies which was to accompany the reading the three thousand words was also finished. Hughes in particular had been monitoring the

preparation of the movie but Chayes and I had also spent time at the studio in Washington reacting to film clips and synchronizing the movie and the three thousand words that were to be read by Bowles as narrator.

At Los Angeles the platform was in effect complete, or virtually so, when the hearings began. I can't recall a single idea added or alteration made in the platform as a result of the hearings. As a matter of fact, the people writing the platform did not attend the hearings, and while we tried to get some systematic reports back to us from Dick Murphy and the others who were in the hearings, no system was really ever set up.

GRELE: Did John F. Kennedy or anyone representing him participate in the drafting of the platform?

SUNDQUIST: The platform is frequently referred to as the Kennedy platform, and the assumption seems to be that it was cleared with Kennedy or that his people participated in the draftmanship. This may have arisen from the fact that Bowles was announced Kennedy man. Harris Wofford of Kennedy's staff did work with Bowles on the civil rights plank. But I believe he did this as much on his own as in his Kennedy capacity, and I could not say for sure that Wofford cleared the draft with or for Kennedy. It is possible that the entire three thousand words -- including all of the civil rights plank -- which Mr. Bowles regarded as *the* platform may have been checked with Senator Kennedy or Robert Kennedy, either in general or specifically; I can't say for sure, but what I can say is that at no time was any of part two of the platform,

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which I was in charge of, in any way altered on the basis of any information that came from Kennedy or any of the candidates. Frankly, I am sure the candidates were concerned with delegates, not platform language, at that particular time.

The real pressure for a look at the platform came not from the politicians but from the interest group representatives, most of whom were familiar faces from among Capitol Hill lobbyists. Bowles had established a very strict rule of secrecy that no parts of the platform were to be cleared with anybody, and we hid behind that injunction of secrecy throughout. Quite apart from ethical questions, as a practical matter it was the only way to save ourselves from having the entire list of witnesses before the platform committee trying to get into the suite where the work was being done. We could turn all of them away by assuming everybody that nobody else had any access there either. But no clearance also meant no review by anyone. I have commented on occasion that this was the most irresponsible job I have ever undertaken in the sense that I had the last word, and almost without supervision, on what went into those parts of the platform that the chairman was not handling personally. I was in a position, in effect, to determine the Democratic party position on major substantive issues almost by myself. What I fell back on was the position that the party had established in the legislative battles over the preceding eight years -- meaning, when I say the "party," the Northern-Western-liberal wing of the party. We embodied in the platform a fairly specific endorsement of all the measures on which there was a pretty good consensus among the

Northern liberals. Many of these measures had been beaten by the coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans, either in committee or on the floor but we had the upper hand in Los Angeles. There were no Southern committee chairmen to contend with, and we made the party policy.

MORRISSEY: Can you tell us the origin of any particular planks?

SUNDQUIST: Well, to begin with our internal division of labor, Chayes handled the international and military complex; Dick Wallace wrote on space, science, and technology; Bill Welsh handled agriculture; the principal draftsman on the conservation and natural resources section, who tied in to Bill Welsh, was Ben Stong [Benton Stong], who was on the staff of the Interior Committee; Milt Gwartzman wrote the first draft of the labor

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section; and I handled the domestic economic issues and general miscellany, assigning sections out to whomever I felt I could give us the best advice. For example, the sections on the civil service and on the Post Office were written by Bill Brawley [H.W. Brawley], the staff director of the Senate committee. He knew exactly the words to use to catch the eye of the employee unions.

The labor section was assembled by Gwartzman after conversations with the AFL-CIO and various other Capital Hill people. The principal issue in this section of the platform was whether the party would again go on record for repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. That seemed to most of us to be an unreasonable and rigid position that we had to find a way of getting away from. We did this through some language which, as I remember, proposed improvement or revision of the Taft-Hartley Act rather than repeal. We did, of course, discuss this question with Arthur Goldberg as the representative of the AF of L - CIO before preparing our draft.

GRELE: Who was responsible for the drafting of the Civil Rights section of the platform?

SUNDQUIST: The Civil Rights section was very much the personal creation of Chester Bowles, relying on Tom Hughes, Abe Chayes, and Harris Wofford.

Bowles knew of course that this would be the most controversial section of the platform, and he was determined to make it an extremely liberal position.

The missile gap position came essentially from the line which Senator Symington had developed which was as near to an official Democratic party position as you can get.

The part that I personally labored on most was the rationalization of the Democratic economic views. We had been under attack for years as the party of spending; this had been the principal Republican line and it probably did us more damage than any other single issue. We had to appear in this platform as fiscally responsible, and yet advocate all the spending measures for which the party stood. I had developed for Senator Clark and he had used on the

Senate floor what we called our four point program of fiscal responsibility. We proposed to raise money and balance the budget by, first, the natural increment in revenues that would come from the growth of the economy at a rate of five percent a year, which the Rockefeller

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Brothers Fund had made respectable; second, by closing tax loopholes, which would raise up to as much as ten billion dollars if you included every conceivable tax loophole; third, by increasing the collection of taxes by increasing the number of revenue agents, who were able to collect many times their own salaries. (The staff of the Internal Revenue Service had been badly cut in the Eisenhower period); fourth, by economizing on government expenditures. Of these four, the first two were of course the most important, and became later the essential Kennedy fiscal program. This was not checked with any economist at the time of the platform preparation, but it had been adopted by the Democratic Advisory Council, in which John Kenneth Galbraith, Seymour Harris, Leon Keyserling, and others took part, after I had presented it to the Executive Committee of the Council.

We presented to the drafting subcommittee of the platform committee the semi-finished text of both part one and part two, and Bowles explained to them that he expected to read part one at the Convention; that part one would be distributed and printed, and part two, then, would have a status which he left a little bit ambiguous. Without any prompting on the part of the staff, the members of the committee themselves raised the question about the status of part two, and came out one hundred percent on the side of the staff, saying that it simply had to have the same status and be adopted by the Convention. The group all felt that it could be adopted by the Convention without being read, particularly since the planning for the platform presentation allowed only enough time for the movie with Bowles' three thousand words to go with it, which was to be presented on prime evening time. We had, meanwhile, decided that you couldn't have part one and part two bound separately because they were too inter-related. Part one included whatever Bowles wanted to say on a given subject; he might have one paragraph, for example, on agriculture. That was enough for him, but we felt it wasn't nearly enough for the farmers. But you couldn't have the rest of agriculture amplifying his one paragraph somewhere else, so we early concluded that it all had to be dovetailed. We devised the idea that what he had in his three thousand words would be put in boldfaced type, and the rest of it in light type. This is the way it was ultimately printed. Bowles did not know of our decision and did not see it until he was on his way to the press conference where he was to present the platform to the national press. I handed him a copy in the elevator on his way down, and he looked at it and went pale for a moment. He

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said, "This isn't exactly what I expected." But then he said, "I guess it is too late now, isn't it?" And I assured him it was.

To go back to the deliberations of the platform committee itself, the drafting committee met for two days. In this committee, Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.] observed that

the labor section, in which he was particularly interested -- he represented the District of Columbia -- omitted certain sections that had been contained in previous platforms, and I was privately instructed by Bowles to show the draft to Arthur Goldberg, representing the AFL-CIO. I went to his hotel, and Goldberg and I ran through the previous draft and the present draft, and I brought back to Joe Rauh about eight insertions which would make sure that the Democratic party was not in the position of backtracking on the labor policy that it had adopted in 1956 and previous years. Rauh moved the amendments in the subcommittee, and the labor section was then cleaned up satisfactorily. We may have made a small amendment in the atomic energy section at the insistence of Chet Holifield, who was on the drafting sub-committee. We added something on Equal Rights for Women, under pressure from Emma Guffey Miller, of Pennsylvania, primarily; the exact language was put in by Patsy Mink of Hawaii, later a Congresswoman. Her version was not exactly what Emma Guffey Miller asked for, but when I read it on the telephone in a response to a call from Mrs. Miller, she indicated it was satisfactory to her. Beyond those, I can think of almost no impact that the drafting sub-committee had on the draft that we presented to them except certain points of grammar and form that they spotted as we read the thing aloud -- except, of course, for the Civil Rights section. Everybody was hurrying through the other sections so that they could concentrate what time they had in their two days on Civil Rights. As I recall, we spent almost the entire second day on that subject. Every paragraph was attacked by the two spokesmen for the South on the drafting sub-committee; Senator Ervin [Samuel J. Ervin, Jr.] of North Carolina, and Congressman Harris [Oren Harris] of Arkansas, with Ervin doing the bulk of the argumentation. The chairman had tried to get fair representation of the party on the drafting subcommittee and had appointed not two, but four Southerners. One of them didn't show up at all, and the other, Congressman Kilday [Paul J. Kilday] of Texas, did not appear during the time when the Civil Rights section was being debated, so the odds were very strong against Ervin and Harris. This did not inhibit Ervin from arguing and debating to the full; all in legal and constitutional terms, but with considerable passion. At one point when Ervin said, in effect -- turning to the gentlemen from the North -- "Won't you just give us more time in the South to rectify these conditions? Wait

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until the next Convention." Congressman Celler [Emanuel Celler] of New York turned to him with a look of some scorn and said, "I would put more faith in that promise, Senator, if I hadn't heard it at so many previous Conventions." At any rate, Ervin made a number of motions to strike or modify, and they were overridden one after another by votes of 11-2, 12-2, or 13-2, depending on how many members of the committee were in the room. It was quite a reversal of what had been happening to the Civil Rights advocates in the preceding years on the Senate floor. Ervin had no filibuster rule this time to back him up and force concessions by the majority. I started out to say that the Civil Rights plank was amended. Bowles went in there thinking he had about as tough a plank as could be written, but Congressman Green [William J. Green] of Philadelphia noticed an omission; there was nothing in there pledging the party to the F.E.P.C. This had seemed to Bowles and the others as the most extreme proposal of all those under consideration; the one least likely to be

fulfilled if the Democrats were elected; and the one which we should, therefore, not go out on a limb. But when Congressman Green moved in the platform committee to add an F.E.P.C. plank, that was carried also by a vote of 11-2. In the meeting of the platform committee itself, for which only two or three hours were allotted, the Civil Rights issue was again, of course, raised. This time Ervin had reinforcements; Senator Holland [Spessard L. Holland] of Florida was vocal, among others, but the vote was again very lopsided. There was no amendment made in the meeting of the full platform committee except two. One was a relatively minor amendment offered by Senator Dodd [Thomas J. Dodd] of Connecticut. The other was an amendment to the language of the Equal Rights plank offered by Emma Guffey Miller, and accepted by the full platform committee not because they believe in it, but out of respect to Mrs. Miller, who by that time, I think, had served on the platform committee for something like twelve consecutive Conventions.

The drafting committee met, as I remember, at the Ambassador West Hotel. And the security on this operation was so good that the press did not find us until the very end of the first day. By the time we emerged from the first meeting several of the representatives of the press were there, but not a word leaked from any of the members of that group. By the end of the second day the national press was generally represented there, although

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the fact that it was being held in an out of the way place kept the number of press people down. But there was still no leak at that point. As I remember, the Chairman made very general comments to the press. At the main meeting of the platform committee, held at a different hotel, the press was standing outside the door in great numbers, and they had been accustomed to being fed tidbits of information. However, the Chairman had laid down the rule so strictly that nothing leaked out of that session, to my knowledge. One of the members of the committee was apprehended by Dick Murphy, who was maintaining security at the front door, smuggling a copy of the platform out within a copy of the *New York Times*. Mr. Murphy demanded to see what was inside of the *Times* and confiscated the copy of the draft and carried it back into the room. "Scotty" Reston [James B. Reston] of the *New York Times* called and announced in his imperious way that the *New York Times* had always been given a copy of the platform in advance because they ran a complete text. I had specifically checked this point with the chairman and he had said, "We release it to all the press simultaneously, and you do not give it to anybody, including the *New York Times*, until release time." Reston called while the platform committee was in session, and I took his call. After explaining the ground rules to him, he said, "I'm sure if Mr. Bowles knew who it was on the telephone that he would authorize me to have a copy." I said I was sure he would not, and that terminated that conversation. Later I got word that Chairman Butler would like to have a copy of the platform delivered to him within the next hour or two, a time which coincided with the deadline for getting material off to the *New York Times*. As it happened, we had printing difficulties at the plant which made it impossible for me to get an authentic copy of the draft to Mr. Butler until after the *Times* had safely gone to bed. I'm not sure this was wise because the result was that the *Times* did not carry the complete text for the first time in many years, and no other paper took advantage of our philosophy of equal opportunity to all newspapers.

So it may all have been a net loss. Nevertheless, it illustrates how tightly guarded the document was.

The general tone of the platform was, of course, extremely liberal. It was generally hailed as the most outspokenly liberal platform the party, or any party, had turned out in our time. This was due especially to the selection of Bowles as chairman. He had written a number of books laying out his own philosophy

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of what the Democratic Party should stand for. The platform had, in previous years, been put together by the elders of the Congress, particularly the House of Representatives, with John McCormack as the Chairman. As a result of that kind of leadership the platforms tended to be compromising, particularly on truly controversial issues like Civil Rights. So to those who complimented us on the tone of the platform as a faithful reflection of the real views of the mainstream of the party, I have always given the credit to Paul Butler, who decided a long time ago what kind of a Democratic Party he wanted the party to be, and who selected the chairman who would produce the kind of platform that would represent his -- Butler's -- ideas about the party. And Bowles inevitably chose people to work with him who were of like mind. The compromisers -- like Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker], who had headed the committee staff in 1956 -- had no representation at all on the committee staff this time, and the drafting subcommittee was truly representative of the full committee and hence predominantly liberal.

MORRISSEY: Do you think that Butler, in making that selection, consulted any of the leading candidates?

SUNDQUIST: I have no way of knowing that. Butler was in an ambiguous position in that he had made it known that he was personally for Kennedy, but had also taken the stand that as National Chairman he was going to be strictly neutral. But any of the candidates could have stood on the platform since all of them came from the mainstream of Democratic thinking. Kennedy was by no means the farthest to the left of the major candidates. Subsequently it was clear that Kennedy took the platform more seriously than most other members of the party; he did feel that he was running on that platform. Later on, various of his administrators and advisors would feel that, well, after all, it wasn't their platform, they didn't participate in putting it together. But Kennedy referred to it frequently during the campaign and in his first year in office.

MORRISSEY: That is surprising because somewhere I have heard that he was unhappy with that platform because he thought it promised too much.

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SUNDQUIST: Well, I didn't mean that he was happy with it. What I meant was that he felt bound by it to a surprising degree. And while it promised too much, it

promised very little that President Kennedy did not try to deliver on. The more difficult sections of the platform to carry out, such as, for example, the revision of the Taft-Hartley Act or the F.E.P.C., had to await the right circumstances before they could be passed.

MORRISSEY: It is safe to say, then, that this was not a platform written directly for John Kennedy?

SUNDQUIST: Oh, absolutely. The people who did the writing were not cleared for their adherence to the Kennedy political group at all. It might be useful if I go back a bit on that point. There had been in the Senate a rather loosely knit liberal bloc which attempted to take over the leadership of the party on a number of occasions, and we had a loosely organized coordinating group that met regularly at the staff level. This group -- which might be called the "Outer Circle" of Democratic Senators -- included Paul Douglas, Senator Clark, Senator McNamara [Patrick V. McNamara], Senator Hart, and Hubert Humphrey as a group working consistently together, augmented by others on particular issues from time to time. But the group I have named were, except for Humphrey, from big-city states and were sensitive to issues important in the states with the large electoral votes. Humphrey acted as communicator with the Major Leader, with whom the other senators in the group had difficulty establishing rapport -- he did not show great sympathy for the issues which pressed them hardest. It was out of the thinking and activities of this particular bloc of Senators that most of the platform emerged. Senator Kennedy was always sympathetic to this group but detached. One had the feeling that he did not want to get identified with any wing of the party. He was not attached to the old liberal orthodoxy either. He seemed to be trying to think through his positions fresh. We were all impressed that each time he did grapple with an issue and think it through fresh, he came out with what was essentially the old liberal position. But he didn't take any of the liberal orthodoxy on faith. At the staff level we met each Friday for a time in 1959, when we were struggling with the unemployment problem, in the office of Bob Perrin [Robert Perrin], Senator McNamara's administrative assistant. Douglas, Hart, Humphrey, Clark, and one or two other offices were regularly

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represented. Myer Feldman came usually as a representative of Kennedy and did participate in planning some of our strategy. Nonetheless, I had the feeling that Feldman was there more to keep track of what we were doing than as co-conspirator. Whereas the rest of us could commit our Senators to certain policy positions on the basis of our knowing what the agenda was, and having consulted with them, and knowing in general what they were trying to accomplish, Feldman never tried to commit Kennedy to participate in a floor fight, or a round robin letter, or any of those tactics that the liberal group was using.

MORRISSEY: When it was announced that Lyndon Johnson would be the Vice Presidential candidate and some of these people in the northern, western

liberal wing of the Democratic party balked a bit, was the platform utilized as exhibit A in demonstrating that the party would preserve its liberal coloration?

SUNDQUIST: IT seems to me that the Vice President designate used it as his exhibit A. In his initial declaration, he stood on this platform and that satisfied many people who may have had some doubts. In that sense a platform is a useful document, although those who labor hard on it are always a little bit disappointed that it is forgotten as soon as it is. This may rise from the fact that the old platforms were written by politicians who were full of hyperbole. We prided ourselves that this platform was written by intellectuals and made good rational sense.

MORRISSEY: Were there any hard feelings that some of the old timers like John McCormack had been excluded from the writing of the platform?

SUNDQUIST: I don't believe so. I think John McCormack had probably found it to be something of a bore. There were some hard feelings on the part of the leadership staff on the Senate side; Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker] and his assistants, who had been the staff of the platform in 1956. They made clear they resented being totally excluded from the staff work, but they made no attempt to move in on the operation in

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Los Angeles. We also found it necessary to exclude from the room certain old and good friends of the liberal wing of the party, but I guess they all understood why you couldn't write a platform with more people than you had space to house.

MORRISSEY: Moving on to the campaign; how did you become connected with the speech writing team of the candidate?

SUNDQUIST: I participated in the campaign as a recruit of Archibald Cox, who was in charge of the speech writing group. He had heard that I had written speeches for Harry Truman in the 1952 campaign. I reported for duty before Labor Day, sometime during the last half of August in Cox's headquarters on L Street. I worked there until the first of October when I joined the Kennedy mobile group. Cox, for a long time, had been in charge of organizing the intellectual community to produce ideas for Kennedy, and he moved his operation to Washington with the idea of producing speech drafts. On the whole, this effort was not successful. Most of the intellectuals who trieste heir hand at speech drafts came up with rather dead prose more suited to articles in learned journals than delivery from the stump. And Cox was not an expert editor who could translate them into usable speeches. Some of us who were working with him took some of them and rewrote them into speeches and sent them out, but we found very little of our stuff coming through as we read the texts that floated back in or the excerpts in the papers. After about a month Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] asked me to join this group, which traveled

with the candidate, and I reported in Chicago on the morning of October first. I flew up to Minneapolis and down to St. Louis and worked with Ted and Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] from that point on. They had established a system for advancing the various speeches. John Bartlow Martin had developed the system during the Stevenson campaigns, and the Kennedy group decided to apply it throughout. The theory was that the advance man would go to the point where the speech was to be given, interview all the local people about what should be said, pick up the local color, and, if possible, stand in the very spot so that he could feel the situation -- then, having gone through this advance work, write his speech. In the last

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month or so of the campaign, the speeches were divided into three groups. Martin handled one, Joe Kraft [Joseph Kraft] the second, and I the third. We, in effect, leapfrogged one another going to the places where the speeches were made to be, then retiring somewhere to do the writing, and then joining the party on the airplane a day or two before arrival so that Ted Sorensen and Dick Goodwin and the candidate could go over the actual drafts. I worked mainly in the Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Northeastern area, although I wrote various odd speeches for other points along the way as well. But almost all of the major efforts that came in from the three of us were pretty well recast by Sorensen and Goodwin, who were keeping control of the major campaign documents. We wound up having more of a final say on the shorter, extemporaneous jobs where we handed the candidate a few notes as to what the local issues were, and what local color might be used. These were not the speeches that got into the newspapers.

MORRISSEY: In what way were you involved in the staffing of the new administration?

SUNDQUIST: I was not personally involved. As you know, of course, Kennedy had sadly depleted the ranks of staff people on the hill. As a matter of fact, not long after inauguration he said he had taken all the best staff people from Capitol Hill, which hurt the feelings of those of us who were still there. We who were still there were spending our time trying to get the administration to sponsor the measures which we as individual Senators and Congressmen had been sponsoring up through 1960. Senator Clark's concerns, for example, were the Manpower Development and Training Act and the Accelerated Public Works Act, both of which were hanging fire at the time of the election. Our job was to try to get the administration to incorporate them into its program. This was not always easy going, and certainly it wasn't quick going, but eventually the word would come that they were prepared to approve a particular piece of legislation. Then sometimes a Senator would have to exert himself a bit to get permission to be the sponsor of legislation which he had already introduced, because the protocol was to give the committee chairman first crack at it. In one case, this meant that Senator Clark had to go to the committee chairman and, in effect, get a waiver so that he could be the sponsor of the Kennedy administration bill on a subject with which he had identified himself.

GRELE: Do you recall any other specific pieces of legislation on which Senator Clark and the Administration worked together?

SUNDQUIST: Yes, another was the Department of Urban Affairs. This had been Senator Clark's bill for four years, ever since he had come to the Senate. He picked it up from Senator Lehman, who retired when he arrived. Clark was thoroughly identified with it. The President, during his campaign, had committed himself to proposing a Department of Urban Affairs and Housing, or its equivalent, so immediately after the inauguration I was assigned to make contact with the people who were doing the planning for this department. There were a number of questions they were getting ready to face. One was whether they should try to create the new department through legislation or through a reorganization plan. A second was whether the new department should be given any functions other than those already administered by the Housing and Home Finance Agency. At the Senator's instruction I wrote a memorandum -- I believe over my own signature -- to Lee White of the White House staff outlining the pros and cons on both these points and making recommendations. On the question of whether it should be attempted by legislation, I recommended only that Senator McClellan [John L. McClellan] be consulted because he might have strong views on it, and he was the man who had to handle it. This was undoubtedly something they would have thought of anyway. On the second point, we took a strong position that the action should do no more than change the name of the Housing and Home Finance Agency and elevate it to department status, because to move any functions into it from other departments would stir up the opposition that you wouldn't otherwise encounter. Word came back presently that the White House was ready to move with this piece of legislation and it would be sent up as a bill rather than a reorganization plan. We were told that we would have to get waivers from the ranking people on the Government Operations Committee, of which Clark was not even a member, in order to be the sponsor of the bill. Senator McClellan, being against the bill, was of course happy to give us a waiver. The next ranking member was Senator Humphrey, who was also happy to give way. Then Clark put the bill in. Humphrey handled the management of it within the committee.

On the Manpower Development and Training Act, we had what we thought by early 1961 was a bill that could pass quite readily. We

heard, however, that Secretary Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] wanted to make a few changes in it before it was introduced under the new Administration. The consideration of the issue downtown seemed to take an inordinately long time, during which there was no communication between the Labor Department or the White House or any other part of the Administration with Senator Clark, the potential sponsor. Finally the bill came up, and Clark had only a few hours before it was to be introduced to comment up on it. Goldberg and others, particularly Mike March [Michael S. March] of the Budget Bureau, had so thoroughly rewritten the bill that it was unrecognizable. We had no choice but to introduce it as

rewritten. Then Sam Merrick [Samuel V. Merrick], who was Clark's man on the Labor Committee staff, and I made an analysis of the changes in terms of what Clark should accept, and what appeared to make the bill impossible to pass. We cleared with Senator Clark and prepared a new bill incorporating a dozen or so major revisions which we sent to the Labor Department. The next morning Secretary Goldberg was appearing before the Labor Committee to testify on some other bill, and just before the hearing opened he motioned Sam Merrick and me over to the edge of the rostrum, came up and said very abruptly, "If you fellows persist in the changes you propose to make in the Manpower Development and Training Act, I will have to resign." Well, this startled us a little, because we didn't realize we had the power to bring about a Cabinet member's resignation. But we stuttered long enough for him to say, "I'll send Under Secretary Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz] up this afternoon to go over the bill with you in detail." Wirtz came up that afternoon, and in a calm and relaxed manner went over our proposed changes one by one. And as I recall, we persuaded him that we were correct in every one of the changes we proposed to make, and we heard no more about it from Secretary Goldberg. So the bill was put in then -- and eventually passed -- in a version closer to our original version, and substantially revised from what the administration had sent up.

The Accelerated Public Works Act had a much rockier road because the Administration was not prepared to approve it on its merits. This bill had been conceived by Clark, after the report of the McCarthy Committee on Unemployment Problems, in the form of a Standby Public Works Bill, which would be put into effect with an automatic trigger whenever unemployment increased beyond a certain point. However, early in 1961, unemployment was already above that point, so it could not be introduced as a standby measure. Clark, therefore put it in a form whereby it would take effect

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immediately, and he thoroughly expected the Administration to support it. The Administration, however, dragged its heels week by week, and month by month. I made contact with Kermit Gordon, a member of the Council of Economic Advisers, who explained to me that they were having a series of meetings on this and related policies. And I spent some time with him reviewing possible variations of the automatic formula and other specific questions. The bill, however, as they had tentatively drafted it to be sprung when and if the President gave permission was essentially our bill; it had not been revised in anywhere near as radical a way as the Manpower Development and Training Act. So we marked time while Clark got more and more impatient, and eventually in August the Senator received a letter from the President in which he said some kind words about the bill, but indicated that he was not ready as of that time to go forward with any such measure. However, when the recession didn't end, or, more accurately, when the economy didn't resume a reasonable rate of growth early in 1962, the President did give the go ahead. At that point we had to go again through the process of getting permission to introduce our own bill in its revised version. We obtained the necessary clearances, and Clark put in the bill which became the Accelerated Public Works Act.

In summary, this was a frustrating period when Senators could only wait to be told what to do and had little scope, and certainly no encouragement, to take any legislative initiative. The creative side of our job largely disappeared -- with all the experts now available downtown, Clark had less need for my advice. Much of his staff work as a legislator was now done downtown. I stayed through 1962, because I wanted to see him through his re-election campaign, but then I joined the other Senate staff people who had moved to the Executive Branch.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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