

Herschel D. Newsom Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 9/21/1967
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Biographical Note

Herschel D. Newsom (1905-1970) was the Master of the National Grange from 1950 to 1968. This interview focuses on the relationship of the National Grange and other farm organizations to the Kennedy administration, the 1960 presidential election, and the 1960 presidential campaign, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

with

HERSCHEL D. NEWSOM

September 21, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Mr. Newsom, do you recall your first connections with John Kennedy or the first time you met him?

NEWSOM: Yes, I've had occasion to recall the first time that I actually met him. We didn't have a great deal of reason to contact Senator Kennedy at that time because he was not a member of committees with which the Grange is primarily concerned. But I did have occasion to discuss a certain subject matter with him when he was in the Senate, and I came back and reported to my colleagues here in the Grange office that this is certainly an alert young fellow. He was young by my standards, at least.

HACKMAN: Do you have any memories of his stands on agriculture at that time, particularly in the '56 to '60 period?

NEWSOM: Well, in some of his early experiences on the Hill, we found him not in agreement with Grange positions on a few important issues, but this never distresses us when we feel that maybe we haven't had occasion or opportunity to get the information that has led us to our particular position. And I'd say that John F. Kennedy in the Senate, and later in the White House was an outstanding illustration of the type of fellow that may have had his mind made up all right, but he was never closed to conviction in our experience, if you had new information to give him that he hadn't previously had made available.

HACKMAN: Previous to 1960, did you have any discussions with him or the people around him as far as his stands on agriculture that you recall?

NEWSOM: Yes. One discussion that I recall very clearly had to do with our traditional Grange support for the creation of, and for the support of the rural electrification and the rural telephone program. And I would say, in fairness to Senator Kennedy at that time I clearly recognized that, though he was a well informed and highly educated person, he had not had the occasion to understand some of the rural points of view in the more sparsely populated area where the congressional mandate to the effect that these REA [Rural Electrification Administration] coops should reach the farthest potential subscriber irrespective of the cost of building the line to get to him. This is a social compulsion that had not been made clear to Senator Kennedy, and he was rather quick to recognize that since this is a social compulsion imposed on these rural electric coops, that this may be a fact or that enters into a sort of a subsidized interest rate for the loans to build lines which the power companies had declined to build because they couldn't expect to make a profit out of the lines at the normal cost of money.

HACKMAN: Do you have any idea who he was listening to particularly in these areas at that time, agriculture and. . . .

NEWSOM: I don't know that I have anything that's worth recording here, frankly, except that I think it's reasonable to assume that he'd been listening to the people in his own area that he knew best. That's all right; that's a part of the process of democracy. But in the wider area that he was then serving as a member of the United States Senate, it became somebody else's responsibility to make him aware of some facts that he hadn't known.

HACKMAN: Do you recall observing any great change in him, let's say from '56 to '60? In '56, for instance, he supported the [Ezra Taft] Benson stand against support of high tariffs. Some people commented that as he looked toward the presidency, he began to change his views in the '56 to '60 period.

NEWSOM: I don't know that I have any basis for commenting on that. I can say to you that I came to hold the man in great respect, and I think it's probably more accurate and more reasonable to say that as he became aware of some of the relationships, interrelationships between agriculture and the rest of the economy, and as he became aware of the fact that agricultural prices, even in spite of the long record of what some of our friends call governmental interferences with competition in agriculture, still agricultural prices had been primarily influenced, as even they are today, by a relatively free operation of the law of supply and demand when there is no other price or wage structure in the American structure that is so influenced, so directly influenced.

I think President Kennedy, at least, and to some extent in his later days in the Senate, as you have already indicated, I think he'd

begun to realize that there were some factors that needed to be taken into account in my own midwestern agricultural operation, for example, that he had not been aware of in his contact within Massachusetts. I'm not saying that his contact was that limited, but he hadn't become aware of the fact that agriculture needed a supply management program just as all other business. Even non-agriculture labor has to have a supply management program through their collective bargaining operation.

And yet by reason of the peculiar combination of agriculture as being a business and a labor input structure where for the most part we have a widely diverse. . . . I remember talking with Senator Kennedy, and about this terminology. We have a widely diverse, and want to maintain a widely diverse, individual enterprise system in agriculture. And so we have to have some government authorization and cooperation in achieving the necessary supply management program because to think that we could do it by eliminating the individual entrepreneurs and creating the "big three" corporate agricultural structure as some economists have advocated, didn't make any sense to me.

I was right pleased to say that, or to come back to the office and report that Senator Kennedy was beginning to understand that agriculture really was and ought to be a part of the total American economy and not something separate and distinct from it. And I was not really surprised that, as president of the United States, he began to support some realistic programs.

HACKMAN: In the period when you first started talking to him, did he have any substantive knowledge or understanding of agriculture economics and the way the thing worked, or was he pretty naive?

NEWSOM: Well, this calls for a statement of opinion that I'm a little hesitant about, but I'm never hesitant to say what I believe if I have any basis for believing it. I would say that he had some knowledge, but he didn't have as much knowledge as he needed to pass final judgment.

I distinctly remember a remark that the president-elect made in December after the election in November and that I will never forget. Somebody in a small conference up at the Carlyle Hotel made this statement that there's so much division among agriculture and farm commodity groups that it's difficult to know what a new administration could do that a former administration had not done. And I was tremendously impressed by the alert observation of the president-elect when he said, "Well, I just don't agree with that. We have no right to expect you people to agree among yourselves from your respective points of view if that agreement requires some sacrifice of principle or position of long standing, logically arrived at from your point of view. On the contrary, Orville [L. Freeman] and I (speaking of

his then secretary of agriculture-designate, Secretary Freeman) will have to call on you people to tell us why you have these different opinions, to give us the reasons for arriving at your respective positions. Then we must be prepared to make some judgments of our own." I can hear his voice echo even yet. And I came home and reported to my wife that we have a great young chap as president-elect. This was an encouraging statement to make.

HACKMAN: Going back to the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower administration, could you comment sort of in general, about your relationships with the Eisenhower administration and particularly the Department of Agriculture and Secretary Benson?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes, I'd be glad to. As a matter of fact, just the week before last, I had the occasion to have a very pleasant hour or more of interview with General Eisenhower up at his Gettysburg farm, a major portion of which we recorded on tape and sound, when ^{we} reminisced about some of these things. I always held any president of the United States, irregardless of my midwest Republican background, in high regard, and I've had the privilege of knowing five of them rather personally. And every one of them have been great Americans. This goes for Ike as well as President Kennedy and President [Harry S.] Truman. I didn't know President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt quite that well, though we were proud to claim him as a long-time member of the Grange.

But what I'm trying to say to you is that I've seen almost two extremes as president of the United States. President Eisenhower, perhaps partly because of his, maybe largely because of his military training and experience, was inclined to delegate responsibility and just almost take a hands-off policy. I've seen a couple of presidents that probably try a little bit too hard to make all of their own decisions when the job is clearly beyond human capacity and what's more, has been for some period of time. I don't know how you strike a happy medium in this thing. As I've said, I respect all of them, every one of them.

But I do remember one very significant experience with General Eisenhower as president when we had the opportunity to talk with him about the basic philosophy as well as the mechanics within the Grange program for bringing American agriculture more legitimately into the economic sphere which is this America of ours. And I talked to him about the necessity of recognizing that there is a very clear distinction between the human needs of the people around the world and a commercial market manifestation in terms of price to meet those needs and that this was the philosophic background that led the Grange years ago to evolve what then was called a two-price program: a domestic price for that which goes into American stomachs, or the primary American market; and a secondary price which might well be related both to the economic competitive influence of world markets,

on the one hand, and to the feed value of this world bread grain called wheat on the other. And then I attempted to apply this differential in pricing to some of the other commodities.

We had--Joe Parker, our legislative counsel for the Grange, and I--had more than a half hour with President Eisenhower. As I remember it, it ran closer to an hour before the interruptions became so persistent that the interview had to be terminated. And I shall never forget the fact that the president said, "Well, Herschel, I think I not only agree with your philosophy, but I don't see anything wrong with your mechanics. But you'll have to go talk to Ezra," meaning Secretary Benson, of course, his Secretary of Agriculture. And I haven't many times come so close to being rude to a president as I probably was at that time, and I'm sorry about that, but I didn't intend to be rude. I just said, "Mr. President, I've talked to Ezra until I'm blue in the face, but he doesn't listen like you do."

Now I hold Ezra Benson in high regard, and I'm proud to call him a personal friend, and I think he feels the same way toward me. But he just simply could not visualize governmental interference, as he called it, with the markets for agricultural products. If I understood him accurately, and I tried to, I think he felt that we ought to get rid of economic institutions, as some of the economists refer to them, that interfere with the law of supply and demand in the other aspects of the American economy rather than to inject them into agriculture. Well, in my judgment, this is not a choice that was for us.

So when I made this remark to Ike, I meant it in all sincerity, but I think the president decided that I didn't have an appropriate respect for his Secretary of Agriculture. And he rather sharply said, "Herschel, I'm not sure you understood what I said. You either talk to Ezra, or you forget it."

I promptly tried to mend my fences by saying, "Mr. President, I'll do the best I can." But still, I guess, I was a little too obstinate to give up. I said, "But I would appreciate it if you could possibly find the time to call the Secretary and let him know you've asked me to. . . . Maybe he'll be more receptive." But this was a little offensive to Ike, again, and I didn't get back in the White House for about six weeks.

My point is that Ike made a statement to me then that I shall never forget, he said, "You have to understand that the presidency of the United States is entirely too big for any one man. He must choose his lieutenants, and then he must back them up." Well, I'd like to temper that latter thing. I recognize the validity of Ike's opening statement; it is too big a job for one man.

I really think that President [Lyndon B.] Johnson would be doing some things to improve the agricultural situation now if we could get his mind to stay on it long enough. I've had the privilege of talking with President Johnson. I think he listens well, but I know just as well as I know anything that I don't get across Pennsylvania Avenue on my way back to this office until somebody else takes his mind off the subject that I've gotten him to think about. Probably the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State. And all of us have to recognize that at the immediate moment the worldwide requirements on this America of ours and its president, no matter who he is, must take priority over some of the domestic problems. But the dickens of it is, the job is so big that we don't know how to get the man's mind back on it when, in many cases, he's the only person that can make the decision.

And this was our frustration with the Eisenhower administration. We had a Secretary of Agriculture whose intentions, I think, were wonderful; but somehow or other I sometimes suspect that after Ezra Benson left his position as the administrative head of our National Association of Farmer Co-ops and became deeply immersed in the affairs of his own church, he became more idealistic and less realistic. I would be perfectly willing to say that thing to Ezra Benson himself, and I'm sure he would understand it as a friendly criticism. But we just didn't. . . .

It's a bit ironic, from my Republican point of view, that during a Republican administration, the federal government, my federal government, with a great president, permitted an obsolete farm program to operate so long that we piled up a record storage of farm commodities in government hands that was a problem to government and a depressing influence on agricultural income. I even think I recall having heard Ike himself make the statement ~~that~~ "From a dollar-and-cent point of view, the wise thing for us to do would be haul the surpluses out and dump them in the Atlantic Ocean." But I agree with him also when he said, "But that would be unconscionable in our present world." And so it would have been.

HACKMAN: Well, let me ask you, during the Eisenhower period, in your discussions with other farm leaders, were they having the same type problems in communicating with Secretary Benson?

NEWSOM: Well, from my personal point of view, I think the farm leaders, so-called, that were not having difficulty with Secretary Benson were the Farm Bureau [American Farm Bureau Federation] leaders. They had reached a point in their philosophic judgment that they apparently were working on the assumption that all we have to do is get our farm prices down low enough that we could hold the rest of the, world's feet to the fire, as one of their spokesmen once said, and teach them the lessons of competition.

And I think this was a realistic position; I think this philosophy appealed to Secretary Benson more perhaps than he may have even realized that it appealed to him. I think the fundamental result on American agriculture would have been just as serious as to withdraw all wage and hours and all immigration restriction and have a free inflow of foreign labor, and we would certainly destroy the purchasing power of America's great laboring class of people and destroy the whole economy. This is the way I feel about it. And I think it is increasingly true in agriculture because it's as Teddy Roosevelt once said, "In the long run, this country can't be a good place for any of us to live in unless it's a good place for all of us to live in."

We may not like some of these governmental interferences in economic institutions, but they're a part of the economy of a rising living standard when we're in a world where there is such a diverse pattern of economic opportunity and living standard and. . . This was the whole GATT [General Agreement on Tariff and Trade] Kennedy Round negotiations: How do we eliminate some of these restrictions without destroying the very living standard the restrictions themselves have helped to generate?

HACKMAN: Well, maybe we can talk about that more in detail later. I was going to ask you, as the '60 election approached what sort of relationships did you have with Vice President [Richard M.] Nixon, who was a nominee as far as what his policies might be in the agricultural area?

NEWSOM: Well, so far as I know, we were very successful in keeping our relationships with Mr. Nixon on the basis of those of a relationship with the vice president of the United States and not with a candidate for the presidency. In the long history of the Grange, there's only been one exception when the Grange departed from the fundamental concept of being deeply interested in the politics of self-government but keeping itself aloof and isolated from the partisan politics of elections and of candidates. And I think we've rather successfully done that. I suspect that this may be one of reasons that I had the satisfaction of being introduced not so long ago as the only national organization head of any sort that had had presidential appointments from five successive Presidents, regardless of politics. I'm rather proud of that record. I didn't realize it was accurate until I had heard that statement. But I guess it is.

HACKMAN: Well, what about platforms of the two parties in 1960?

NEWSOM: Oh, we regularly appear before the platform committee of each of the major party conventions. I personally appeared many times over the last twenty-five or thirty years. Occasionally, we've asked somebody else to make the appearance before each of the platform committees. I've enjoyed this experience. And

so far as I can recall now, we've always been very agreeably received.

I'd have to confess to you that I've become keenly aware of the fact that there is some basis for the statement that platforms are for standing on while you're running, and we had the unique privilege of being very happy with the Republican platform back in '56 and again in '60 only to discover that we had more problems with our fellow, my fellow Republicans in the Congress in trying to activate a program in conformity with the platform statement of the Republican party than we did the representatives of the majority party in the Congress in those years when, in reality, we'd been much less successful with the platform committee of the Democratic party than we had with the Republican party.

I remember frankly, that Joe Parker and I were up most of the night two nights in a row. One night we had Congressman (Melvin R.) Mel Laird, who was chairman of the agriculture subcommittee of the Republican platform committee out in Chicago. And if I'd have known how to improve the Republican platform for agriculture, I expect I would have been permitted to restate some of those statements. I'm not claiming the credit for writing it; I don't mean that. But I think I influenced it and I know Joe Parker of our office influenced it. We thought it was a real good platform. We didn't get along so well with the representatives of that particular Republican party after the platform was over. But this is a part of the processes of democracy, and I have to confess to you, I love the process even when I'm not winning. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Had you discussed with Vice President Nixon what his position, what his attitude was toward Secretary Benson, for instance, or what he might try to do?

NEWSOM: Yes, yes. And I guess I'd have to confess to you that although I sometimes felt that I had some basis for knowing what he thought, I was never quite sure. I'm saying to you that I'm not willing to indict the former Vice President at all, but I just never could quite be sure of what he thought after our conversations with him. I enjoyed him; I enjoyed talking with him; but if I have to be so blunt as to say so, his comments were less convincing and less meaningful in terms of detail than I had hoped that they might be.

HACKMAN: What about the Democratic platform in 1960 that was written in Los Angeles? Did you feel this was a good platform? Did you feel that you were successful?

NEWSOM: No, I really. . . . There were some good features in the 1960 Democratic platform, but it didn't satisfy me nearly so well as the Republican platform did.

HACKMAN: Do you remember particularly what bothered you?

NEWSOM: Yes. The Democratic platform leaned entirely too far in the direction of what they call production control to suit me. Now I think there is a very distinct difference between market regulation or supply management, on the one hand, and production control.

I think the world food crisis is a major case in point here. None of us want to deny the people of the world the necessary food to not only ward off starvation but to give them a reasonable basis for health and vigor and consequent production to their own economy and the peace of the world. But we just simply have to understand that when you let those human requirements for food dictate an increase in production of 30 per cent or 33 per cent more wheat acreage sown last fall and do not take the appropriate steps to segregate that increased production to meet U. S. Food for Peace program or a foreign affairs requirement for the products of agriculture, then you've invited exactly what we're being compelled to live with now, and I'm very unhappy about it. Wheat prices are fifty cents lower than they were a year ago. Soybean--I sold my soybeans recently at about a dollar a bushel below what they were a year ago.

The reason for this is that we heeded the demands and call for increased production, and our government even asked us to stimulate more production because our supply management program in agriculture was working so well that we were not only divesting the government and the taxpayers of the responsibility of the storage of huge surpluses, but we were getting them worked back into the commercial markets at a reasonably satisfactory price level to the point that some of our well-intentioned friends got scared to death that we might be having a national or an international emergency and be caught short of food. Well, this is a very real prospect when you get down to somewhere near the manageable proportions that you have to have to maintain a reasonable market operation at a reasonable price level. So we objected strenuously to the second 15 per cent increase in wheat acreage; we could not conscientiously object to the first 15 per cent increase. You recall that the administration asked for one 15 per cent increase in acreage, and then they got scared even worse and thought maybe that wouldn't be enough, so they injected another 15 per cent on top of the 15, making better than 130 per cent of the previous year's wheat acreage.

Well, then we had a pretty good, favorable growing season for wheat and for other grains. And grains become feed grains in many cases, and they're interchangeable. So a surplus of wheat destroys the price level for my corn or for my neighbor's grain sorghum. The law of supply and demand just works. We don't ask any other industry in this country--and this is one of the things that Jack Kennedy had begun to understand--we don't ask any other industry in this country to produce for a foreign relations or a foreign affairs or a defense program without guaranteeing them, that industry, that their extra production will not destroy their primary market. And we can't do it with agriculture if we're going to

avoid destroying agriculture.

HACKMAN: Going back to 1960 again, as the Democratic contest for the nomination for the presidency developed, do you remember what your feelings were about the various Democratic candidates? Johnson and [Stuart] Symington and [Hubert H.] Humphrey? and Kennedy?

NEWSOM: Yes, I remember. And for this purpose, I don't have any real hesitancy of saying, "Well, I'm glad I'm a Republican now because I don't guess I have to try to make the choice for the Democrats. But I can't help but think that this young chap from Massachusetts is probably less well equipped to become president of the United States than some other people that are in the race, but it looks as though he might win." I'm happy to say to you that I concluded later on that Jack Kennedy was exceedingly well equipped to be president, and there were some things that I hadn't known .

HACKMAN: Do you remember of the other candidates which ones you had had any extensive contacts with on agriculture problems?

NEWSOM: Well, I had had contacts with Senator Johnson over a period of years. I had not always been able to get Senator Johnson--or when he was over in the House, I talked with him a couple of times before he moved over to the Senate--I'd not always been able to get him to indicate that he agreed with our point of view, but he'd been aware of the problem and of the subject matter over a long period of time, and I felt that this background knowledge would make him a wise choice, from agriculture's point of view, to become president of the United States. And we'd had, as I have already indicated, some disappointing relationships with Senator Kennedy, and I had my fingers crossed about his being the presidential candidate.

HACKMAN: Did you attend the '60 convention at Los Angeles, the Democratic convention.

NEWSOM: No, no. As a matter of fact, I believe it was my assistant, Roy Battles, that attended the '60 convention in California and presented our platform statement out there. I don't remember just why I felt that I couldn't make that convention; I like to make them, I really enjoy making them, but I'm sure that it was Mr. Battles that made that convention.

HACKMAN: After the nominations were made then for both parties and as the campaign developed, was it clear to you that most of the Grange membership would probably support the Republican ticket because, well, particularly because of the . . .

NEWSOM: No, it was not clear. I think that it's a little difficult for me to be sure that. . . . I'm trying to think of what most of the Grange membership was thinking. We don't,

as I've already indicated, we don't permit the Grange itself to get involved actively in supporting individual candidates even in the primary much less in the general election. But as individuals, they're first of all Americans and Grange members secondly. So we hope, and we encourage them to take a part individually, but not in the name of the Grange.

But I know that a lot of us were real frustrated. We did not have any assurance that Mr. Nixon, as the Republican candidate for president, would recognize that the Benson policy with reference to agriculture was no good, just not adequate, to say the least. Neither did we have any real satisfaction in the Democratic platform nor in Senator Kennedy's background, so I think a lot of farmers made their choice, and a lot of rural Americans probably made their choice as between a couple of candidates and a couple of parties that they really didn't have great enthusiasm for in either case.

HACKMAN: During this period, were you making any extensive attempts to get more firm commitments from Vice President Nixon and Senator Kennedy?

NEWSOM: Oh, sure. We never quit trying that, but when the campaign's on, it's not always profitable. There have been some times when I have thought that the Grange has made its greatest progress with the 'outs' rather than with the 'ins' because of reasons that I think will be clear. And I can give you some illustrations of that, but I don't think that's important--the illustrations, I mean.

The point is that we had opportunity to contact both Nixon and Senator Kennedy a couple of times during the campaign, and Senator Kennedy referred us to other people to contact, and I'd begun to feel a little better during the course of the campaign than that unsatisfactory platform made me feel, I'll tell you that. And on the other hand, I think it was maybe working a little bit in reverse. I couldn't get any assurance out of Mr. Nixon that he even understood some of the statements in the platform. The statements in the Republican platform in 1960 were completely contradictory to the policies of Ezra Benson and the Eisenhower administration, yet I never could be sure that Nixon understood this. I talked with him three or four times, and I just was not satisfied after the conversations.

HACKMAN: Do you recall who Senator Kennedy referred you to? I had heard that [Willard W.] Will Cochrane was doing quite a bit of advising in this period. From what I've gathered from you, you would have been in somewhat disagreement with his strict production control ideas.

NEWSOM: I think either Dr. Cochrane changed his emphasis by the time I got well acquainted with him or he was misrepresented in that because the statement that Willard Cochrane was

a rigid production control man had less validity than some of my own contemporaries thought it had. Now, he leaned farther that way than I do, I'll tell you frankly, but he recognized that you had to maintain some degree of competitive influence or you would destroy the individual enterprise system, and this is a fundamentally valid point that I was delighted to hear Dr. Cochrane confirm.

I didn't get acquainted with Willard Cochrane during the campaign; I didn't get acquainted with him until Secretary Freeman brought him into Washington. I'd say that this was a relatively satisfying experience. We had some differences of opinion on emphasis, more than anything else. Yes, I remember Mr. Shriver, Sargent Shriver was one of the men that Mr. Kennedy referred us to, and we also had opportunity to. . . . Well, I don't know. One or two of the governors that were identified with the Kennedy campaign . . .

HACKMAN: Herschel Loveless, for one.

NEWSOM: Yes, and Orville Freeman. This before any of us had any way of knowing that Orville Freeman was a probable secretary of agriculture, but he was distinctly identified with the Kennedy campaign, as you are well aware.

HACKMAN: Did you attend that big meeting out at Des Moines, by any chance? There was a meeting. . . . I think some of the farm leaders were there. Do you recall that at all?

NEWSOM: When was this?

HACKMAN: It was in the '60 campaign, probably August or September.

NEWSOM: No, I'm sure I didn't. As a matter of fact, I don't recall it, so I'm sure I didn't.

HACKMAN: All right. After the election, then, do you recall. . . . And you talked about this before, some of your conversations--I know Kennedy, I believe, met with some of the farm leaders a couple times in December and January with Secretary Freeman, and maybe some of the people from the Hill, like Senator [Allen J.] Ellender, [W. R.] Poage. Can you recall some of those meetings?

NEWSOM: Yes, I can recall three or four of them. As a matter of fact, I quoted from the one in the Carlyle Hotel where there were about nine of us, nine organizations and commodity groups represented. I think there must have been eighteen or twenty people in the room.

I don't know that I recall anything of great significance, except that in one of the meetings, one of my colleagues, as a spokesman for a

contemporary farm organization, in my judgment, seemed rude and seemed to show a lack of appropriate respect for the chap who had just been elected to the highest office in the land by announcing--and as I remember it, he didn't mince any words about it, he just said, "Mr. President-elect, I shall have to leave early." Which to me was offensive in the first place; you just don't deal with a president or a president-elect in that terminology under the discipline under which I grew up. That's not your option. But he went on to say; "But I'd like to tell you that our organization will continue to work with the Congress, and we'll expect your administration to confine itself to administering the decisions of the Congress. This is our concept of American government," he went on to say.

And I was very uncomfortable. Why, I just didn't appreciate a personal friend of mine, and a colleague, talking to the president-elect in this terminology, and I wondered what in the world, how I could get out of there or something. But the president-elect almost startled me and thrilled me at the same time by saying, "Well, Mr. (and called him by name, which I shall not do here), I wonder how you would interpret the mandate on the chief executive to deliver a State of the Union message to the Congress. I seem to interpret this as being a responsibility to make some recommendations to the Congress. I'd be interested in your comment." And Mr. Kennedy did this in the greatest of good humor, and I decided that here was another evidence of a man that would fill the shoes of the presidency of the United States exceedingly well.

HACKMAN: In this period when the new administration was trying, to some extent, to get the farm groups maybe to work more closely together, how did the Farm Bureau, which had been closely identified with the Eisenhower administration in agriculture, fit into this? What was their attitude basically at this point?

NEWSOM: Well, I think I can answer your question best, and I have no hesitancy in doing it, I'm not anxious to use this opportunity to scold my Farm Bureau friends, but the man that I was quoting was [Charles B.] Charlie Shuman, president of the Farm Bureau. For this purpose, I think I ought to record that.

HACKMAN: Well, as you read in my letter, no one is going to get into this. . . .

NEWSOM: 1 Well, that's. . . . And unfortunately I don't even feel that they've been open to conviction. This is a personal judgment, and I respect their right to disagree. But this whole question that you've raised came to the fore even yesterday, as we are making this recording, when the final meeting of the Public Advisory Committee on Trade Negotiations met with [William M.] Bill Roth and Irwin Hedges

in the former offices of our great Christian Herter who was, first of all, Kennedy's and subsequently Johnson's special representative on trade negotiations.

This is a magnificent chapter in the evolution of a logical and sensible world relationship between nations and between people, this Kennedy Round negotiation, the GATT. It was a little disappointing in comparison to what some of us had hoped we might achieve at Geneva. I shouldn't say we because I'm talking as Americans now. I was over there, but I wasn't there long enough to pose as an expert in any sense of the word. But I think I do understand some of the problems that we confront in trying to alleviate or gradually reduce some of the trade restrictions that have been born out of the national preservation necessity. And Mr. Shuman, in yesterday's meeting, just went so far to say that he congratulated our negotiating team because they did a good job to have gone into the Kennedy Round with their hands tied.

Well, I don't agree with Charlie's terminology at all; their hands weren't tied. My lordy, they did a magnificent job, and they didn't act like their hands were tied; they were negotiating. I don't think-- since we brought Charlie and the Farm Bureau into this, I think I just have to say they don't understand what negotiation is. Negotiation . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

NEWSOM: Negotiation involves a certain amount of respect for and consideration of the other fellow's point of view and the necessities which generate that point of view. And I think my own sons and grandsons will recognize that the Kennedy Round was a terrific step in progress in the world. But to get back to Charlie-- Charlie might agree with me on that; I'm not going to speak for Charlie, but you've made specific mention of the Farm Bureau. I'd just like to say that the Farm Bureau attitude was expressed very effectively, though I disagree, when Charlie said, "The international wheat agreement (of course, he's talking about what the GATT negotiations evolved under the heading of a cereals agreement) isn't worth anything. As a matter of fact, we think we'd be better off without it," as I remember his statement. And then he went on to say that "It's obvious that we're going to be selling millions of bushels of wheat below the minimum price level."

Well, Charlie has got some basis for saying we're going to be selling millions of wheat below the minimum price level. I hope we don't, but we may by reason of the factors that I injected awhile ago. We've generated a production here to meet human need without clearly taking the necessary steps to insulate that production from the commercial market. So, unfortunately, Charlie may be right in that particular statement, but he is distinctly not right when he says that the international wheat agreement is no good. Maybe it's not as good as

I'd like to have it, but it's an evolutionary step in the progress that we've got to try to make. And I could prove that.

I don't know that there's any point to proving it for the purpose of this tape, but we're getting a worldwide recognition, not fast as we ought to, but we're getting a recognition of the importance of the world food problem, and my hat is off to President Johnson and Secretary Freeman because of the tremendous efforts that they've made in this direction.

I had a personal conversation in the garden of the Villa le Bocage with a couple of fine young Japanese in which . . . The price range structure which is now being resolved in the wheat agreement which will go to the Senate next month became the basis for the Japanese people saying that they have some reluctance to get themselves committed to a prorative share of the world food program because, as a great importing nation of the important grain of the world, they might readily find themselves under some circumstances going back into the market to bid for the increased quantity to make their contribution to the world food program which would, in effect, be running the price on themselves as importers for their own domestic requirements clear above the ceiling. And so I was inclined to be very receptive to their point of view that if their participation in a world food program was generating that kind of domestic expense for meeting their own requirements, then they ought to be permitted an escape mechanism wherein they could provide their aid to the developing nations outside of the actual purchase off of the market of the products of agriculture.

Well, there were some people who didn't want to agree with that, but I was pleased to find out later that our ambassador, Bill Roth, and his advisor in Agriculture, (Irwin Hedges), did accept this and recommended to Eric Wyndam White, the president of GATT and the general secretary of the negotiations there, that he ought to accept this as a legitimate statement under which Japanese people and government should be excused from that kind of participation in the world food program. Now this is progress, but it's negotiation.

And I think that's our fundamental difference in point of view with the American Farm Bureau Federation. We're willing to negotiate because we think you'll likely come up with a great deal better answer if you negotiate than you will if you just write your own ticket all the time.

HACKMAN: Going back to that period after the election, did you have any discussions with President-elect Kennedy or the people around him concerning your choice for the secretary of agriculture?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes.

HACKMAN: Do you recall what your recommendations were at that time?

NEWSOM: Orville Freeman, Orville Freeman.

HACKMAN: Then there was certainly no problem with that.

NEWSOM: That's right.

HACKMAN: But what about other appointments in the Department of Agriculture at that time? There were a lot of people, I know, from the [National] Farmers Union appointed in the department.

NEWSOM: Well, I think we had some influence in some choices that were made. Since you mentioned the Farmers Union, I'd say that they've been on one side of us politically or partisan wise, as a rule, as the Farm Bureau's been on the other. And I guess I would have expected, if I 'd have been honest with myself--I don't recall that I made up my mind even--but I wasn't surprised that the Farmers Union was dictating more appointments in the new administration than the Grange was, although we made a few suggestions that were accepted, and we're proud of them.

HACKMAN: One of the first things that came up in the new administration was that emergency feed grains legislation in '61. Do you remember anything in particular about the legislative efforts to get that passed?

NEWSOM: Yes, I certainly do; I certainly do. As a matter of fact, we generated the basic principles of the existing feed grain program in a Grange feed grains committee meeting in 1957 out in Chicago. And we'd vigorously formulated and begun to espouse this Grange feed grains program with President Eisenhower and with Secretary Benson in '58, but we just didn't get to first base with it. But the emergency feed grains program moved us a long way toward the traditional Grange feed grains program, and we're not fully arrived yet, but we're making progress.

HACKMAN: I'd skipped ahead just a little bit. In that period between the election and the inauguration, a number of task force reports came out. There were a bunch of task forces working on agriculture. Do you remember the Grange playing any particular role in these or what your opinion was toward the reports that were issued?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes, I remember generally about these task forces. We were afforded the privilege of trying to influence some of them. I'm not sure I know of any cases where we were really effective in influencing them in that period of time, but we've never been hesitant about saying what we believed to be best for rural people and America as a whole.

HACKMAN: I noticed you checking your watch. If you're out of time, I'm free to come back some other time.

NEWSOM: No, no. I just wondered how long we'd been visiting.

HACKMAN: All right, then going on into '61, the more important legislation came up in that year, and Title I, which was the more controversial part, didn't make it out of either of the committees, agriculture committees in the House or Senate. One part of it, if you recall, was this new approach which was supposed to be taken in which the farm committees in conjunction with the secretary of agriculture were going to propose the exact terms of the commodity program. Do you remember what the Grange's view of that approach was?

NEWSOM: Yes, we were generally in agreement with this approach. As a matter of fact, the Grange has talked about a commodity-by-commodity approach for many years because one of our cliches, which may not have meant so much to other people as it meant to me, was, "It's ridiculous to think that you can design a shotgun approach to the various commodity problems in American agriculture. You may design a program that fits the production, marketing, and distributive requirements of peanuts and then try to apply it to cotton and it wouldn't work, or to wheat and it wouldn't work." And so I think, probably, we were father to the idea here, but unfortunately, like a lot of other good ideas, this one has to be taken in some degree of temperance or it becomes a monstrosity.

In other words, you cannot design a program for wheat that ignores the possibility of wheat being exchangeable with other grains as a feed product because if you have surplus wheat, you destroy the price level on my corn. And so we had to modify some of our statements. This is what sometimes happens: You get a basically sound idea, and somebody takes it and runs away with it without having had all of the background in it, and then you almost have to disclaim a sound idea once in a while unless you can get some reasonable temperance in its application.

So we had to begin real earnestly then to get our potential friends to understand that you do have to have a series of commodity programs, but you have to have them designed within a general framework of a total agricultural problem and a total agricultural philosophy. And we've been awfully slow, but we've made some real progress over a period of time in reaching this objective. For example, in recent legislation, you know, we've actually given our farmer members a great deal more opportunity in managing their own productive resources by making it possible that they can shift acreage allotments from wheat to feed grains and vice versa under proper circumstances, and this is progress.

HACKMAN: What was the state of cooperation between the Grange and the Department of Agriculture as far as working and contacts on the Hill in the '61 legislation? Do you remember how that

developed? Working in the committee? For instance, did the Grange work particularly with some Republican members where the Department of Agriculture might have been stopped?

NEWSOM: We tried to, we tried to, but to be perfectly honest with you, I was very much disappointed in some of my Republican friends up on the Hill that I'd known over a period of years. Unfortunately, they appeared to me to be taking an attitude of being against whatever the administration would propose instead of accepting our invitation to propose some constructive amendments that would have improved the basic We ran into a very disheartening obstructionist attitude on the part of the Republican members of the Congress, in many cases [Charles A.] Charlie Halleck from my native Indiana, Charlie and I had a friendly but vigorous visit one day; and he said he was getting tired of my continuing to call myself a Republican, I'd joined the Democratic party. I said, "Well, Charlie, you just don't even know what you're talking about. I just don't know where in the devil to find you people that are pretending to lead my Republican party." And this is about the way I honestly felt about it.

HACKMAN: What about people like Congressman [Charles B.] Hoeven, who was the chairman or the ranking minority member in the House, and Senator [George D.] Aiken from Vermont? Did you work well with these people?

NEWSOM: Well, we've worked exceedingly well with George Aiken, Senator Aiken, I should say, and he's a long time Grange member. There were times when I couldn't get the senator to realize that his Farm Bureau friends weren't always right, and in many cases, they weren't in a given instance. But George seemed to pay more attention to them for a long time. I think he's a wonderfully fine individual. With Charlie Hoeven, I respected him personally a great deal, but we just couldn't get through to Charlie somehow or other. He seemed determined to follow the Farm Bureau line. He had a friend who he listened to very much from Iowa, a good chap who was one of Ezra's assistant secretaries, Marvin McLain, now on the Farm Bureau staff, and I think that tells the story.

HACKMAN: Were you working with Mr. [Kenneth M.] Birkhead's office, legislative liaison over in USDA [United States Department of Agriculture]?

NEWSOM: Yes, we tried to stay as close to Ken Birkhead as we could possibly stay. And we even shared confidences with each other and, so far as I know, respected those confidences so that each of us could be more effective in the battle in which there was practically no difference in purpose or in specific attitude over a great period of time. Just worked real closely with Ken Birkhead, and I regarded him as one of the most valuable public servants that I've ever known.

HACKMAN: I was going to ask you--we talked a minute ago about this new procedure in Title I of that '61 bill. Do you have any feelings as to why that never got out of the committee? Some people have said that Congress didn't want to give power to the secretary of agriculture and this . . .

NEWSOM: I think this is right, and this is one of the facts that I've never been willing to discount. As a matter of fact, we had some serious doubts about the validity of that particular section under the circumstances, although generally I think I've always been willing to place a higher degree of confidence in public officials on the assumption that if they don't deserve that confidence, then the thing to do is not to try to tie their hands in the position but get somebody in the position that is worthy of the confidence. And I've never had any reason to have the slightest diminution of my confidence in Secretary Freeman. But I recognize that from the point of view of some of our colleagues here, they didn't know Secretary Freeman as well as we did, and neither did they know who might be in the position some other time that might be less worthy of confidence than Orville Freeman.

HACKMAN: What about the amount of cooperation between some of the other farm groups and the Grange in this period, particularly the National Farmers Union and some of the other ones, maybe the Missouri Farmers Association and some of these, as '61 progressed? Was any of this initial feeling of cooperation retained through '61?

NEWSOM: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Not only through '61, but to the present time. Now, with. . . . All of these general organizations, with the single exception of the Farm Bureau, we try to confer and understand ahead of time where our differences may be and, if possible, reconcile them to some extent, and if not, we reserve the right to speak our differences, as Jack Kennedy said in the Caryle Hotel, by golly, to give the committees of Congress or the administration the background of our differences and permit them to make some judgments of their own. There have been times when I'm glad I didn't have to make a final decision on some of these problems, but I have some recommendations for the other fellow to take into account.

And I think this is the way it has to work. But we had right downstairs here in our own [Albert S.] Goss conference room, which was named for my distinguished predecessor who believed in conferences as a means of reconciling differences and charting progress, as he used to state it--we had as many as twenty-eight, twenty-nine, in one case I think thirty-three, agricultural commodity groups and general organizations represented in conferences where we were trying to do exactly this, reach agreement as far as we could.

Now some of these these didn't work out quite as well as they should because once in a while we'd have a neophyte in the group who, I'm sure, didn't intend to violate any confidence, but he'd go out and try to make a statement as to what he thought the agreement was and attribute it to his own particular organization. This generated some internal problems among the groups. That just isn't the proper way to proceed in this conference mechanism. But these are lessons that you have to learn as you go along. I guess I'm old enough and got enough white hair now that I'm entitled to be a little fatherly in my. . . .

HACKMAN: Were Secretary Freeman and the administration influential in promoting this cooperation, or was this something you people did together on your own in most cases?

NEWSOM: Well, I think for the most part we did it, although we kept Orville pretty well advised as to what was going on and asked him if there were any points of view he wanted to inject in it. We've, as far as I'm concerned, made it crystal clear that we expect Orville to listen to us and we're willing to listen to him long enough to know what he thinks, but we reserve our right to make up our mind what we think. We've been delighted in our working relationship, though, all the way. This doesn't mean we've always been in complete accord, but by golly, we've been in accord as to what we're trying to do. Not always as to how we do it.

HACKMAN: Looking back over your past experience, was the amount of cooperation in these Kennedy years and subsequently something new in its degree?

NEWSOM: Well, it was new insofar as recent history is concerned. I'm old enough to remember when a young fellow from New York became president much earlier. I wasn't active on the national scene then, but my father was. And I had some pretty close information that there was a great deal of this same sort of joint effort made, although I doubt if it would have looked as good to me as the recent effort that's been made to reconcile these differences, with the one exception I've mentioned.

HACKMAN: Looking back at 1961, if you can recall something about your feelings at that time, had that year marked any sort of a real turning point in the Grange's stand . . .

NEWSOM: 1961?

HACKMAN: Right. Had the acceptance of the Kennedy administration programs meant any kind of real . . .

NEWSOM: Well, I just have to say that your question is not a good question there. I remember hearing President Kennedy himself say--I don't want to take any credit away from Jack Kennedy because I'm a great admirer of him, but just for the record, we didn't accept the Kennedy administration program. They accepted the

Grange program. There isn't the slightest hesitancy in my mind about making exactly that statement. Now, we had some trouble with it, but Jack Kennedy made the statement, "Herschel, we've tried about everything else anybody's ever heard of; why don't we try the Grange program." Now that's just about the way it worked out, too.

Now, before I got as well acquainted with Orville Freeman as I am now, I found that he was tremendously sharp and fast moving, but by golly, he was hard to keep up with. I just say frankly that I once complained to President Kennedy that my problem with Orville Freeman was that he was trying so hard he was listening to everybody, and there were some people he couldn't afford to listen to. Well, Kennedy made a wisecrack, I don't have to identify to you now. But Orville was getting some advice that from my prejudiced point of view wasn't as good as we were giving him, and yet when we got away, he sometimes acted on the other fellow's advice.

I remember one weekend Joe Parker and I were over there talking to Secretary Freeman, no, Charlie Murphy--I couldn't think of the former under secretary's name for the moment. Way up about 4 o'clock in the afternoon there was a dickens of a snowstorm coming up, and I just thought that we were in complete accord. I guess I'm a little naive in some of these conclusions that I reach when I think what I want to believe, but I went away from Orville's office that evening feeling very happy. But we took a draft of the proposed bill that you've already alluded to home with us, and it looked pretty good.

But Joe and I worked on it over Sunday, and finally when I got through to Orville at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, I got through to him by phone to tell him that we had some suggestions we wanted to make. And his comment kind of startled me. He said, "Well, I don't know. Come over and let's have your suggestions, but it may be too late. Over the weekend I took this draft up to the Congress, and I think it's already been introduced this morning." And I said, "Over the weekend, the devil. How much weekend is there between 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon and 10 o'clock Monday morning?" Well, I mention this facetiously to show my great respect for Orville Freeman's alacrity on the one hand, but how difficult it was for us to be sure that he wasn't making some mistakes by our point of view on the other. But I never lost confidence in that chap, I'll tell you.

HACKMAN: One of the things you talked a little bit about before was the tariff legislation. Do you recall what your . . . I can remember you had a meeting with President Kennedy at the White House. I believe it was in the winter of '61.

NEWSOM: Let's see, it was in December.

HACKMAN: Right. Do you recall what you tried to impress upon him at that meeting? Was he responsive?

NEWSOM: Yes, well, at that stage of the game I was very unhappy about two things: one of them was that I had to find out from some friends in Germany what was going on in the preliminary negotiations there between our under secretary of state, George Ball, for whom I hold great regard, and some of our European contemporaries. And George Ball had, in general terminology, agreed with the Europeans that we'd engage in the Kennedy Round discussions on an industrial commodity basis and then sometime when we've got time, we'd get around to agriculture.

Well, this was exactly contrary to one of the sections that we had asked the Senate Finance Committee to write into the Trade Expansion Act, and we were fortunate enough to get a chance to tell President Kennedy that we couldn't accept this nor did we think he could afford to accept it under the act itself, Trade Expansion Act, which we had supported and which Jack Kennedy was responsible for getting through the Congress, and that somehow or other this damage had to be undone. Our European friends and the rest of the world had to understand that for once this United States of ours was going to bring agricultural trade requirements into a United States national trade policy.

We made our point, frankly, not to the discredit of George Ball. I have to take responsibility for saying that George Ball's background didn't make him aware of the necessity of this relationship between agricultural and non-agricultural products at this stage in the world history. We should have got to George Ball and prevented him from making that mistake. I expect, I have enough respect for him I think he would have listened, but we didn't even know anything about it. We found out about it by a long transatlantic cable from Germany.

And I never will forget the alacrity of President Kennedy. He asked Charlie Murphy how soon they could be ready to go back to Brussels to reopen this thing with the Common Market people. And Charlie Murphy, whom I respected a great deal, said they could be ready in a few days. Kennedy's comment was, "I think there's a plane at 8 o'clock in the morning." And this was about 10 o'clock at night.

To make a long story short, I'll always remember this experience at the White House because the under secretary of agriculture and the under secretary of state were headed back for Europe the next day at about daylight. It's a great source of satisfaction to me to contemplate the tremendous job that was done under Chris Herter and Bill Roth, two tremendously fine people, but I doubt if I'll ever forget that Jack Kennedy and Orville Freeman were planks in the platform from which that success was wrought.

HACKMAN: Okay. Moving on to '62 then for a minute, can you remember I had heard that the Grange did have some objections to the legislation that was sent up in '62; this was the

So-called ABCD [abundance, balance, conservation and development] legislation. There were some pretty strict production controls in it.

NEWSOM: Yes. This is right; this is right. Well, again, it's a philosophic thing, and I'll not take too much time to it. But the idea of production control, which was the basic concept of the old Agricultural Adjustment Act in the early thirties, as a means of creating a proper price is only just a partial program. It's not adequate at all. The importance, as I've already tried to say, is that we recognize that it's market regulation we want, not production control. We ought to. . . . There is a very important difference. And this was out concern about that particular legislation that you mentioned.

HACKMAN: Do you remember anything particularly about the Grange's role on the Hill? This was a very complicated piece of legislation, and Senator [Allen J.] Ellender had to get a couple of amendments on the floor that were taken out in Committee.

NEWSOM: Yes, in general, I do, although I don't know that I remember any particular details that would be helpful to you or historians in this connection except that here we found that despite a very heavy majority on the side of the party of the administration we, as we have always found, discovered that the members of the committees of the Congress were receptive if you had anything definitely constructive to offer, and we begun to kind of snipe away, frankly, at this philosophy. And the end result was very much more palatable than the original administration proposal.

HACKMAN: As I recall, Congresswoman Catherine May had done some work in trying to get some amendments that the Grange. . . .

NEWSOM: Yes. Catherine May is a member of the Grange in the state of Washington, and we've tried to work very closely with her on this thing, and she's been very helpful in many instances. Several other members on both sides of the partisan division up there have been helpful, both in the course of formal hearings and in reaching them individually.

Graham Purcell, who really had very little agricultural background as far as I know, having been a judge--oh, he knows agriculture, but he had one of the most logical minds, and it was a tremendously satisfying. I don't want to single Congressman Purcell out because there are several people that once you get them to make place on their busy schedules so that you can talk with them a little bit, they pay attention if they think you've really got something to say and don't just plain have an ax to grind.

HACKMAN: What about Senator Ellender? Did you have any dealings with him?

NEWSOM: Yes. Yes, sir. I guess I'd have to say I never thoroughly understood what motivated the chairman. I like him, but, gosh, he's one of the harder people to talk with, frankly, among the people I like to count as friends.

HACKMAN: Was his philosophy, in general, fairly much in conjunction with the Grange approach?

NEWSOM: Sometimes it was, I mean, and then you discover maybe he departed. I mean he took our marketing certificate philosophy out of the wheat program and worked with us and introduced a rice marketing certificate program, which I knew much less about than he did. I knew how well it would work on wheat. I think it would have worked well on rice, and I think the senator was enthusiastic about it. And yet, there were times when his disappointment over that seemed to make him want to throw up his hands and say, "Oh, you're just butting your head against a stone wall." I just can't give up when the objective is a valid one.

HACKMAN: Well, what about the Democratic chairman of the House? [Harold D.] Cooley shared his power in this period pretty much with Bob Poage.

NEWSOM: Yes, well, Harold Cooley was an interesting person to work with. He's another member of the Grange that we're proud of, and he was, on the whole, a real fine chairman. And his close colleague for many years was another Grange member of ours from Kansas, [Clifford R.] Cliff Hope, and I'll tell you we had a tremendously valuable team. Chairman Hope and ranking minority Cooley or Chairman Cooley and ranking minority Hope. I'm real pleased to have been around here long enough to have had the privilege of working with those two gentlemen when they were a good team. I think Harold Cooley needed Cliff Hope, and I'm sure Cliff needed Harold Cooley. So it was a real good experience.

We've always had great respect for Chairman Poage. Bob Poage is a vigorous and fearless public servant. But very frankly I haven't had the privilege personally of following our legislative program quite as closely in the last two years.

Our Grange program has developed terrifically, and I'm now having to rely on our very excellent, though not very large, legislative staff to do most of the leg work and personal contacts. We have a legislative representative by the name of Graham and two legislative counsels named Parker, Joe Parker, and Al [unintelligible], so I just am not quite as close to these problems now as I used to be.

HACKMAN: Right. Moving on to '63, one of the results of the '62 legislation was the referendum, the wheat referendum in May. Could you talk about the Grange's. . . . The Grange took a

very active role in this, particularly with that pamphlet.

NEWSOM: Yes, well in my judgment the major problem that we ran into here was that there was a widespread idea--and here again I think our Farm Bureau friends have contributed to an idea that was not well-founded at all--that there must be a better choice than the one of the wheat certificate program or the one of staying with the old agricultural adjustment program in its basic concept. Now, its basic provision from the early thirties had indicated that any time that wheat growers rejected marketing quotas, then the level of price support would automatically drop to 50 percent of parity, and they could go ahead and produce all the wheat that they needed. But if they accepted the marketing quotas, then the price support level would be at some level established by the Congress--for many years 90 percent of parity.

Well, the amendment to the legislation that became the basis for the referendum was to change the option from 90 percent of parity across the board, which taxpayers had no willingness nor did we have any desire to ask them to continue to support total production even with acreage allotments without any regard to what the market requirements were. So we felt that it was time to have a more realistic proposal in then.

And, unfortunately, the Farm Bureau put lots of effort, and the processing interests were with them putting lots of effort, into defeating the referendum in favor of wheat certificate by voting no, when many growers were fooled, were dishonestly misled into the conclusion that all you have to do is reject this and we'll get you a better program. Well, they didn't have a Chinaman's chance--I mean, Farm Bureau nor nobody else had a Chinaman's chance of getting a better program. And we were not well enough financed and staffed and equipped, and we were unable to get the wheat growers across the country to understand that their choice was only two, one of two. And they were voting when they. . . .

A lot of them told us afterwards when they voted 'no' on that referendum they thought they were voting for a better program than the Farm Bureau was going to deliver to them. Well, they shouldn't have promised to deliver it to them because they didn't have a chance, and in my judgment they should have known they didn't have a chance of delivering it. So we lost that one.

I would say in retrospect, however, we had to accept some compromises in that wheat certificate provision under the referendum that were not totally to our liking. And while I'm terribly sorry that agricultural people suffered the economic consequences of a no vote as long as they did, maybe this was worth something to all of us as a whole because we have a much better wheat certificate program now. As a matter of fact, after the chaos that resulted from the no vote, we were given a little more opportunity to influence the drafting of the next legislation. ✓

HACKMAN: Do you recall at that time there was a national wheat growers committee set up? I believe, M. W. Thatcher headed that thing in that period. Was this group at all effective in building support around the country?

NEWSOM: I don't know, I don't know. I suppose they were, but I don't know how effective. Incidentally, that picture right over there on the table shows President Johnson handing me one of the pens that he used in signing the wheat-cotton bill. And I remember when he handed me that, he kind of irritated me just a little bit by saying, "I don't know whether anybody beside you and Orville like this or not, so Orville suggested I hand you this pen." Of course, everybody else in the room got one then. I can remember when there was only one pen used, but this is not true now. I'm not criticizing the policy, it's just a change.

HACKMAN: I had read somewhere that the Grange, because it had somewhat of a nonpartisan image, wrote the pamphlet on the wheat certificate plan vigorously backing it. One reason was that the Department of Agriculture could not too vigorously back its own plan. How was this worked out, or was it, between the Department of Agriculture and the Grange?

NEWSOM: Well, I'm not sure that it's accurate to say it was worked out between the Department of Agriculture and the Grange. Although the program work was not entirely to our liking, we felt that it was so much better than a 'no' vote that in terms of Grange resources, we put a good little bit of effort into this. Actually, it was Mrs. Newsom who designed the art work for this wheat leaflet, and we found that some of our supporters across the country were writing in for more copies and for more help in supporting the 'yes' vote than our resources would stand, so we told them that we'd make them available if they'd pay the cost of reprints and so forth, so I don't know how many thousands of those leaflets. . . . But we didn't get the job done.

HACKMAN: At that time one of the things the administration was saying was that if this plan failed, if the referendum failed to pass, no new legislation would be passed. Do you remember what your feeling was about that?

NEWSOM: Well, we felt that that was an accurate statement of the prospect because even then we had begun to get into an attitude on the part of many members of Congress that they were sick and tired of having to vote two or three times every session of Congress on farm legislation when a good many of the members of the House didn't have very many farmers that they were interested in in the first place. So they repeatedly told us that they wanted to do the right thing by agriculture, but they've got so many more interests that require more of their time than agriculture does that we'd better get our program organized here and get it all in one package, because they're

prepared to go back to their local district and defend having voted for one farm bill, but if they go back to people that are complaining about the high cost of living. . . .

Everybody seems to think that they ought to have food for virtually nothing--not everybody, that's a little unfair, but we've historically tried to feed people out of diminishing portion of their total income so we'd have more money to stimulate the economy otherwise, and there's a limit to how much we can do it. But we've had several members of Congress saying, "Now, we're not going back to our people and tell them we voted for seven or eight farm bills. If you can get it all in one package or not more than two, we'll give it a good hard look. But don't ask us to vote for too many farm bills." And this is a very real problem that we have in agriculture.

HACKMAN: One of the other things I wanted to ask you about was the Grange's stand on the wheat sale to Russia in '63. Was this a change in the Grange's traditional stand in any way?

NEWSOM: No, not a real change. It was a shift in emphasis, however. We had repeatedly said that we oppose the trade in strategic supplies, so it was a matter of deciding that wheat was not necessarily a strategic item in terms of supporting the enemy, but might even be strategic in breaking down the opposition of the enemy. And I expect I'd have to say, personally, that my long Quaker background probably influenced me to go out on a limb, so to speak, and the delegate body sustained me on that.

HACKMAN: Was this also a factor. . . . Let's see, in '62 I believe, the Grange came out again in somewhat of a new stance on backing sales to China, I believe.

NEWSOM: Well, sales of food supplies, yes, that's right, that's right. And here again I think it's a little difficult to forget some of the admonitions we've heard all through our younger life: if you find anyone hungry, feed them: do good hoping for nothing to gain. Some of these rules have to apply in politics. And I'd like to think that we're going to find a way to learn to live with most of the people of the world and let them choose their own form of government, but make ours so darn good and attractive, they'll want something like ours. And I just feel it's the better part of wisdom to stimulate a relatively free flow of the vital necessities of life between Communist and non-Communist sections of the world except where there are specific reasons not do do it.

Now, you can't trade with Cuba without trading with a government we don't recognize, so I'm not about to propose that one. And maybe this is true with Communist China, although I'm not so sure that it's true with Communist China.

-End of interview-