

Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 1/04/1966
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Biographical Note

Edmund S. Muskie (1914-1996) was a Senator from Maine from 1959 to 1980. This interview focuses on local politics in Maine, John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign, and legislation during the Kennedy administration, including civil rights legislation and the Trade Expansion Act, among other topics.

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Edmund S. Muskie– JFK #1
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
2	First recollection of John F. Kennedy [JFK]
3	1954 election in Maine
5	Convincing Paul Fullam to run for Senate
7	JFK's appearance on television with Fullam
11	Campaign in New England for JFK to be nominated vice president
15	Inviting JFK to speak at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner
17	Hesitation to support JFK because of the religious issue
19	JFK's 1959 visit to Maine
21	JFK's desire to get support from Maine
23	Concerns about division within the Maine Democratic Party
25	Support for Stuart Symington in Maine
27	JFK's focus on Maine during campaign
28	Campaigning for JFK in Lincoln County, Maine
29	Reactions to JFK's first debate with Richard Nixon
30	JFK's loss in Maine
32	Refusal to campaign for JFK in Wisconsin
33	Serving on the Senate with JFK
34	Debate over the Landrum-Griffin Act
37	Democrats' losses in Maine
39	Feeling excluded by JFK
42	Protesting the reorganization of the Securities and Exchange Commission
43	Asserting independence from JFK in Maine
44	Concern about the Trade Expansion Act
47	Ordinary Marketing Amendment
49	Criticisms of JFK's handling of the Berlin Wall
50	Ease of communication with the Kennedy administration
51	International Joint Commission's report on the Passamaquoddy Project
54	Test Ban Treaty
56	Discussion of Civil Rights with JFK
58	Drafting of legislation to develop the Department of Urban Affairs
60	Question on how to approach civil rights reforms
62	Pursuing legislation on civil rights
67	Social contact with JFK
69	Discussing balance of payments with JFK
73	JFK's 1963 trip to Maine
74	JFK's foreign policy speech in Maine
77	Learning of JFK's assassination
79	Meeting with JFK about wool textile problems
80	Textile concerns in the Trade Expansion Act
83	Legislation for pay equality among shipyard workers
86	Meetings about pay equality
90	Professional relationship between JFK and Margaret Chase Smith

95	Senator Smith's vote against the Test Ban Treaty
97	Trying to get Warren Smith appointed as the Federal Commission of Education
99	Congressmen's desire to have personal friendships with JFK
100	1960 Democratic National Convention
105	Performance polls on JFK
106	Bay of Pigs
109	JFK's capacity for growth
110	<i>New York Times</i> piece on the anniversary of JFK's death
111	JFK's legacy

Oral History Interview

with

Edmund S. Muskie

January 4, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: This is Charles Morrissey. Today's date is January 4, 1966. In a moment I will begin an interview with Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Democrat of Maine. This interview will take place in Senator Muskie's office, Room 221, Old Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. This is an interview for the John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Project.

The best place to start would be your first meeting with John Kennedy,

if you can recall it.

MUSKIE:

Well, I think it would be easier to begin with my first personal recollections of him which really predated my first meeting with him. I, of course, was aware of his first election as a young congressman and the quite considerable stir that this created among Massachusetts politicians. I recall it because, at the time, I was active in the affairs of AMVETS, the new veterans' organization which was formed after World War II, and at one point I was invited to become National Executive Director. I think this was in December, 1950, or January, 1951. I was actually Executive Director for a month until I became OPS Director for Maine in January of 1951, and at that time I was interested in the comment among the Massachusetts

politicians about this new young congressman. They viewed the result with some misgivings and misapprehensions. I don't know whether the more foresighted of them saw in young Jack Kennedy a major political force or not, but they certainly recognized his political attractions and his political potential; and they were disturbed by his apparent determination to be independent of the "regular" party organization.

My next personal recollections of him were in connection with the 1954 campaign in Maine. This was the campaign, of course, which resulted in my election as Governor and, I suppose, has historic importance for that reason. But the thing that I recall is the campaign which preceded the election. The Maine Democratic party was not in good shape. As a matter of fact, we had reached a low point which

I described in a letter as "under the bottom of the barrel" rather than at the bottom of the barrel. A few of us who were brash enough and young enough not to recognize impossible odds thought this would be an interesting exercise, at least, in political action at a time when we had time to indulge in it, and people like Frank [M.] Coffin and [Donald E.] Nicoll, who is now my administrative assistant, Harold Dubord, Richard Dubord, Perry Furbush, Tom Delehanty, Alton Lessard, and others undertook to put together a ticket by consensus. At that time the offices open were the governorship, the US Senate seat of Margaret Chase Smith, who was then approaching the end of her first term in the Senate, and the three congressional seats. We felt that if this exercise which we were willing to

undertake was to be meaningful, we had to have a slate across the board and not just shoot for one office, even though we felt that one office, the Governorship, was more vulnerable than others.

And so we undertook what I've since come to recognize as an almost impossible thing, and that is to achieve a ticket by consensus. Important in this consensus was the candidate for the Senate seat. We asked a very attractive Colby College professor of History and Government, Paul Fullam, who was head of the department, as a matter of fact, and who had to get the permission of a very conservative Republican Board of Trustees, to run. We finally persuaded him to run. There were some interesting sidelights on this. He had been an enthusiastic supporter of Margaret Smith when she first ran, but

there had come a period of disillusionment for him, for reasons which were personal to him, which I'm not endorsing or otherwise. Moreover, he had a very deep-seated interest in foreign policy and public affairs and had a capacity for imbuing his students with a similar enthusiasm, so he was an ideal candidate. He recognized and we recognized that the prospects of his winning were pretty small, but we felt that having him on the ticket would lend a tone and prestige to the entire ticket that would help us in the other races.

It was very important to us that he accept. When he finally did, this obviously disturbed Senator Smith. I say obviously -- subsequent to the election. She gave no indication at the time that she was particularly concerned with the weight of her opponent. But he

did make an excellent campaign. He attracted public attention, and we all began to get enthusiastic about his prospects for winning. So we undertook to do everything possible to give his campaign prestige and attention. This was a little difficult in the light of the fact that the gubernatorial race was attracting maximum public attention, understandably, and our best chances were in that campaign.

So Paul decided to go down to Massachusetts to try to persuade Jack Kennedy to, not so much campaign for him, as to appear with him on television. 1954 was significant politically, I think, as the first year that we had live television in Maine, and so we had a captive audience, although a small one, throughout that campaign. People stayed glued to their

sets and would watch anything, including Democrats. This was the first exposure for a lot of those people to Democrats. I suspect a great many people, for the first time in their lives, saw a Democratic candidate, and so this was quite important.

It was important that Paul Fullam get on television because he was an attractive guy and it would be very helpful if a fellow as attractive as Jack Kennedy would appear with him, not to attack Margaret Smith or in any negative way at all, but simply to create a positive picture which had attraction for viewers. Jack, understanding that to be the objective, agreed, very generously, because no one outside of Maine prior to September of 1954 thought we were doing anything significant politically. He very generously agreed to come, and I think the program attracted a great deal of attention.

But I repeat, it was not directed against Senator Smith. Senator Smith, clearly, from things she has told me since, viewed this as a personal attack by Jack Kennedy against her. The way she reasoned it, and I think still reasons it, is that he refused in that year to campaign for his party's candidate for the United States Senate in Massachusetts, Foster Furcolo, for reasons which I'm sure you adduced from other witnesses on this oral library. The fact that he refused to campaign against Leverett Saltonstall but did agree to go to Maine meant to her that he was doing this out of a personal hostility toward her. She refused to recognize that maybe he was just trying to give a helping hand to a fellow in Maine whom he admired. That side of it apparently did not impress her.

And so we all had reason to be grateful to Jack, and we began, of course, that year to appreciate the qualities which ultimately led to his successful election to the presidency.

My next personal contact with him -- again I had not yet personally met him -- was in 1956. I was then running for reelection for Governor, and throughout this period I had been a strong supporter of Adlai [E.] Stevenson. As a matter of fact, in 1952, when we had absolutely no organization at all in Maine, I ran whatever campaign there was for Adlai Stevenson and managed to raise five thousand dollars for his campaign in Maine, which was quite a feat in those days.

So in 1956, he was anxious to do whatever he could to help me in my campaign for reelection and offered me the keynote

spot in the national convention, which I said I wasn't interested in because it was still important to us that we in Maine minimize our connection with the national Democratic Party. Then he asked me if I'd be interested in narrating the film on the Democratic Party which was being planned for the convention, and after some consideration, I turned that down, too. It was about that time that a movement developed in New England to support Jack Kennedy for the vice presidential nomination. Jack did that film, which, I think, was of some importance to the movement which ultimately resulted in the campaign between him and [Estes] Kefauver for the vice presidency. But I think that actually the movement in his behalf began in New England, independent of that film narration which wasn't that important.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall who was promoting that campaigning in New England?

MUSKIE: I know that there was considerable interest in northern New England. After my election in 1954, which was in September -- the earlier election has now been abandoned, of course -- because two months still remained before the national election, I had occasion to campaign in many states, including New Hampshire and Vermont. There has been a lot of feeling over the years that Democracy in Massachusetts was too little interested in developing Democracy in northern New England and that a New England front could really be important, not only for the Democratic Party in New England, but for New England as a region. After all, we have a potential of twelve senators which could be an effective force nationally in the Senate as well as politically in the Party

if we would just work together. And of course, there are the governorships.

There are those who say that if Columbus had landed on the Pacific coast, New England would have ended up being one state instead of six. Well, that may be so, but we would have ended up with just two senators instead of twelve and one governor instead of six, and so on. So northern New England which is very sensitive about being simply an appendage to Boston and Massachusetts, was anxious to develop political recognition by initiating support for a New England candidate for the vice presidency, if not the presidency, and Jack seemed to be a natural.

I suspect that, at the same time, others in other parts of New England were also thinking along these lines.

I know that [Abraham] Abe Ribicoff was, and I know that people in Massachusetts were, including among others, Paul Dever, who, as a matter of fact, sponsored a New England Democratic meeting, a very quiet one, in Boston, not directed specifically towards supporting Jack Kennedy for vice president, but directed toward the objective of New England unity behind a presidential candidate and a vice presidential candidate. I think Paul Dever's activity, plus the receptiveness of northern New England Democrats to this objective, did a great deal of unify New England behind Jack Kennedy in the 1956 Convention. In any case, I'm not going to dwell on that 1956 Convention which I'm sure you've had covered elsewhere. I was not at the Convention because the Convention, I think, came in August, and my election,

you see, was up in September that year, and I had to be home minding my own affairs, so I didn't personally participate in the Convention activities.

But we were very anxious to get Jack into Maine. He had not been in Maine prior to this time, except for that brief appearance with Paul Fullam. It was in the fall of the year, I think. It may have been 1957, but I think it was in 19-- yes, it was in 1957 that we invited Jack to come to Maine to speak at our Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. People were very anxious to have him come; yet when he came, it was obviously in the midst of a long series of speaking engagements around the country, and he was tired and not at his best. As a matter of fact, he made a disappointing appearance in 1957, not in his personal

contact with people, but in his speech. He used what we call boiler plate and it did not go over. I think he, himself, was disappointed with his appearance, but when the dinner was over we had, of course, a wonderful time with him. He made it a condition that we would give him a lobster feed, which we did afterwards. He made a lot of friends even though he didn't make an impression on Maine newspapermen and the group as a whole with his speech.

The next important event, I think, has to do with his lining up of New England states in support of his campaign for the presidency. By that time, of course, Abe Ribicoff had forged to the front as one of the leaders of his national effort, and particularly, the New England effort. In spite of the fact that we thought highly of Jack,

we thought that we had to play very carefully with the question of supporting him for the presidency because of the religious issue.

When I was elected Governor in 1954, although the religious issue didn't enter into the campaign largely because a very small percentage of Maine people knew that I was a Catholic, it was a fact that Maine had never elected a Catholic as Governor, and it was pretty much standard theory that the Democratic Party should not nominate Catholic candidates for the governorship. It was felt that it was almost as impossible to elect a Catholic Governor of Maine as it was to elect a Catholic President of the United States. This isn't the way it turned out.

Nevertheless, the fact is that the

day after my election as Governor in 1954, there was an almost observable shock wave in the state when people realized that they had elected a Catholic as Governor for the first time. By the time '56 rolled by it was clear that this would not be a handicap for me, but nevertheless, we did not know what the impact of a Catholic running for the presidency would be. This was an unknown quantity.

In 1959 we had a Democratic governor who followed me. We had quite a sweep in 1958 in Maine. We elected a United States senator for the first time in the history of popular election of senators in Maine, elected a Democrat to succeed me as governor, we elected two Democratic Congressmen, and we did not want to slip back. So we were understandably hesitant about whether or not we ought to follow

our hearts and support Jack or be cōsier
in protection of our own interests.

Jack was anxious to come to Maine
again in 1959. He still recalled his
previous appearance which had not been
good, and so in November of 1959, we
arranged a special affair to give him
an opportunity to come to Maine and make
his own impression. The Jefferson-Jackson
Day dinner of that year was behind us,
but we had been in the practice of
holding issues conferences prior to election
years in order to develop issues and
platforms and to begin to mobilize political
activity. We planned such an issues
conference in the fall of 1959 and decided,
in order to serve Jack's purposes, to hold
the dinner in the evening. We held it at
the Calumet Club, a French social club,
in Augusta. It did not offer large facilities

for dinner, but the significance to us was that normally we would expect a falling off of attendance after the end of a working conference, and that was a working issues conference. People were there all day, and the dinner was more or less incidental, and we weren't too sure what the attendance would be. We told Jack that, but we said this was at least an opportunity and he ought to come. Well, he did come and the place was jammed, of course. It was an enthusiastic, wildly cheering crowd, and Jack didn't come with boiler plate this time. He had an off-the-cuff speech in which it didn't matter particularly what he said; it was the way in which he said it and the way in which he presented himself. He had an excellent reception which, of course, was an important indication to

us of what we ought to do.

After the dinner, at Jack's request, we met in Augusta at the Governor's mansion. Present at that meeting were Jack and Abe Ribicoff, Governor [Clinton A.] Clauson of Maine, Frank Coffin, who was then Congressman, Congressman, [James C.] Jim Oliver, who was then Congressman in the First Maine District, the national committeemen and other political leaders of the Party. The objective was to try to nail down Maine's position on Jack's candidacy. He felt it was important to do it at that time. He had not yet really gone out to the country. He felt that before he did he wanted to have a solid home front, and the home front was New England. All of the other New England states were buttoned up or in such good shape that he expected them to be buttoned up, and so Maine was

quite important to him. He wanted to have this nailed down in December.

Our problems in Maine were these: I had been succeeded by Dr. Clinton Clauson who was a Democrat, but preceding his election, there had been a hard primary fight for governorship. I had tried my best to take a neutral position. Naturally, I had to support one or the other of the candidates when I went into the ballot box, but I carefully avoided any public indication of where my support or where my preferences lay. But Clauson chose to believe that I was unfriendly to his candidacy and that I supported his primary opponent, so that when the primary was over, and he won by a close margin, there was some hostility there, even though subsequently in the election, I gave him all-out support.

I think I was responsible for at least 75 per cent of his financial support, shared my own funds with his campaign, and did everything I could to help him. But nevertheless, that feeling of hostility carried over from the primary, and it was evident once he became Governor that he intended to shape his own political future and that his objectives would not necessarily coincide with mine. So, for the first time since 1954, there was a potential for division and even hostility in the Party which I was anxious to avoid. I thought it important to get a unified approach to this problem which Jack's candidacy posed for us, and we met in the Governor's Mansion. We didn't come to a conclusion, but I think that as a result of it, we were all pretty sure that Clauson and Coffin and I, and Oliver, could

reach agreement, but we didn't at that time. Jack was quite anxious that we do, but we had another problem. We felt that we had to be awfully careful about committing the Maine Democratic Party without any mandate from Maine political leaders, because it had been our stance in our successful resurgence that this is a party at the grass roots level and that the grass roots controlled. We didn't want any image of bossism to emerge out of this decision.

The way we finally resolved it before the month was out was that, as I recall, we sent Jack a letter expressing our personal wish that he would be the candidate of the Democratic Party and that the Maine Democratic Party would support his candidacy. This proved to be enough,

course, to throw Maine support behind him. This happened before the first of January, and he went from there to a successful national campaign.

MORRISSEY: May I ask a question about that? Theodore White mentions in his book about the 1960 campaign that there was some [Stuart] Symington support in the state of Maine.

MUSKIE: Yes, there was. The Maine Democratic Party, over the years, of course has been a frustrated party until 1954, and there is a tendency for many people in the party to seek recognition one way or another that they couldn't get by reason of political success. In 1952, for example, at the National Convention, Maine's votes -- I think we had eight votes in that Convention -- were split, I think, among four or five candidates. [Richard B.] Dick Russell got

votes. I think [Robert S.] Bob Kerr got votes. Stevenson got a majority, but the others were split every which way.

These amateur politicians, you know, were seeking some way of getting Maine recognition by being cute, as though Maine's political weight at the Convention was sufficient to make it significant. So there was some support in Maine for Symington, but it didn't prevent our giving Jack solid support at the Convention. I didn't really move very far. As a matter of fact, I think there was probably more support in the early part of 1960 for [Hubert H.] Humphrey than for Symington in Maine, more potential support. But of course, Humphrey pulled out of the race before we got to the Convention. If he'd stayed in until the Convention, there might have been some problem with potential Humphrey supporters,

but it didn't emerge and so we were able to give Jack pretty solid backing, and Jack reciprocated by giving Maine unusually strong backing in the campaign.

Maine was the first state that he campaigned in after the abortive rump session of the Congress in 1960, and he gave us a full day -- three stops in three parts of the state -- and he was well received. Then he came back a night or two before election day in a midnight appearance that was rather incredible. He was three or four hours late. He was due in Maine at 8 o'clock in the evening, and it was a cold bitter night, but he was so delayed by enthusiastic receptions in southern New England that he didn't get into Lewiston, Maine, which is our Democratic stronghold, until midnight. It had been my chore to keep the crowd for four hours in the

bitter cold waiting for him, and it pretty much stayed. I think it was one of the things Theodore White mentions as at the top of his recollections of the campaign. So all of the visible evidence in the campaign was that there was strong support and enthusiastic support for his candidacy.

I recall the aftermath of the first debate with [Richard M.] Nixon. I was campaigning, not for myself, of course, that year, but for Frank Coffin who was running for Governor, and the day following the debate I was scheduled to be in one of the most Republican counties in the United States, Lincoln County I'd never carried Lincoln County, although I guess I did in 1964. I was travelling in the small rural towns, crossroads towns, travelling in the stores and the little factories, canning factories and so on, and it was

unbelievable to me -- the favorable reaction to Jack's appearance the night before on television against Nixon. It was 90 per cent favorable, and so I felt that with the appearances that Jack had made and the reactions of this kind, not only to the first debate, but to the subsequent ones, that Jack might very well be the first Democrat to carry the state since Woodrow Wilson did in 1912. But unexpectedly, and especially in the eastern part of the state, the religious issue did have a very strong impact.

To give you some idea of its dimensions, in 1956 Maine polled the largest total presidential vote in its history, 356,000, I think, and [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Ike won in that year, of course, by two to one against Stevenson. In 1960 the total vote was 420,000. Everyone of those 60 to 70,000 additional votes appears to have been cast

against Jack on the basis of the religious issue. Jack got the largest vote any candidate for President in the history of the state received, except for Eisenhower and Nixon -- any candidate, Republican or Democrat. He got 180,000 votes, but it wasn't enough because of this overwhelming outpouring, and subsequently I learned that there was a very strong, vigorous campaign, quietly conducted in the eastern part of the state on the religious issue. So we did lose, and the ironical thing is that a leading Baptist churchman, Frank Coffin, who was candidate for Governor, was swept out in this tide.

Subsequently -- and I might just as well finish out this thought--- subsequently, Jack's performance in office, I think, added to his strength in Maine.

I think without any question, he'd have carried Maine in the 1964 campaign if he'd lived. I think that perhaps there may have been some feeling of regret in Maine, some desire to atone for the reasons for the 1960 results in Maine. His stock was very high in Maine a month before his assassination. Whether or not he would have carried Maine to the same degree that President [Lyndon B.] Johnson did, of course, is something that you can only speculate upon because developments emerged after the assassination that were not present before. It was hard to tell, but I'm sure he would have carried Maine, and that's the feeling on the part of a lot of Republicans in the state who have given me the benefit of their judgment on that point.

So that I'd say, I think with

considerable pride, that Jack won a great deal of support in Maine that no one else ever did. He did so because of his personal qualities, because of his demonstrated interest in the economic future of New England as senator and as a candidate for president. Once the religious issue was out of the way, he had no trouble.

I don't know that I can add anything on the political side. I might add one personal note that I've had some regrets about. In the course of the primary campaign in Wisconsin, [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen asked me to go to Wisconsin to campaign to offset some of the impact they felt Humphrey was making in the Catholic areas of Wisconsin. I refused because of my still current fear of the religious issue in Maine, and I just felt it wouldn't

be helpful to him or to our ticket in Maine for me to be obviously campaigning in Wisconsin for the Catholic vote for Kennedy. I don't think Sorensen ever understood my reasons or sympathized with them, and I never felt subsequently that I had a very close relationship with Sorensen. I think it was as a result of that experience, so I had some regrets about it. I don't think I would have done it any differently. Life is full of regrets, but it was one of those things that happened.

Well, I suppose the next thing to move into is to move into Jack's senatorial career while I was here. Of course, I came to the Senate in January of 1959, and Jack served in the Senate less than two years after I came, and when you consider the fact that the second year he spent campaigning rather than here at his Senate

post, I really only had about a year to observe his Senate career. Up to that point all my contacts with him had been on a political level, and I did not really have much of an impression of his ability or his capacity or his philosophy in action on substantive legislative or policy matters.

My first real exposure to that was the debate on the Landrum-Griffin Act. This was the first great emotional issue that I ran into as a senator and because of the practice of giving freshman senators the chore of presiding over the Senate, I happened to be presiding most of the time that Jack was handling the bill on the floor of the Senate. I was impressed by his performance.

Of course, I didn't have much basis for comparing it with the performance of other senators at that point, but in

retrospect I'm still impressed by his handling of a very emotional, a very controversial question. He obviously had done his homework thoroughly, and this was a field in which it was not easy for a non-lawyer or non-expert in labor-management matters to do homework effectively. The opposition to the bill that Jack was handling on the floor was very vigorous and was led by knowledgeable people in the field, and at that time there was a great deal of emotional support in the country for it. To stand up against this emotional issue took some political courage, but more important, in order to do it effectively, it had to be done on the merits, objectively, dispassionately, on the basis of sound precedents and of a deep knowledge of labor law and labor-management history.

So Jack was impressive on all counts. I can recall, of course, that he relied heavily on [Archibald] Archie Cox in that debate. He always organized a very good team -- a committee staff, outside experts. It's typical, of course, of the Kennedys, [Robert F. Kennedy] Bob and [Edward M.] Ted, as well as Jack, that they ground themselves well before they stick their necks out in public. Jack displayed this quality very effectively and, I think, added immeasurably to his stature in the Senate. He's been described as a loner in the Senate, and I guess he was because his eyes were set on something else than the Senate career. But nevertheless, I think that his performance in the Senate added tremendously to his stature and to the respect in which all his Senate colleagues, even those who had a different political

philosophy, had for him. I know that it was performances like this that enlisted the support of people like Dick Russell and other giants of the Senate. They did respect him. It wasn't just because they like him, because they were attracted by his charm, because he had a way with words. They respected his guts and respected him as a man. And I think that Landrum-Griffin debate was very important to him in that respect.

Beyond that, my relationships and, I think the relationships of most senators with Jack prior to the presidential campaign of 1960, were casual. He had no real subsequent involvement in the activities of the Senate.

The next development has to do with his presidency. I must say that on election night I had mixed feelings. We were still

primarily preoccupied with our fortunes in Maine, and they were not good. We lost the governorship and we lost both congressional seats. We lost legislative seats, and I was left high and dry, all by my lonesome, on the Maine political landscape, and Jack's election, especially since it was in doubt for so many hours, was no real compensation to us at that point in time.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall that he ever commented to you about the number of congressmen who had won in '58 but had been washed out when he won in 1960?

MUSKIE: Yes, I remember that. I can't remember exactly how it went, but he was completely sympathetic, of course, and he hated to see Frank Coffin go down. Of course, we felt subsequently that there were very real advantages flowing to us in Maine

from Jack's performance as President, but at that point things looked pretty dark for us. It looked as though we had lost much of what we'd gained over a painful six-year period. I know that Jack was sympathetic as he revealed in his attitude and his helpfulness while he was President.

Now insofar as my participation in his presidency is concerned, of course, it was not by and large important. I was still a freshman senator with no position of power in the Senate and in no position, really, to be of any help except to add my lone vote and my support and such influence as I could in the Senate.

I can remember one reaction that I had. He, of course, had to work with people who were in a position to be helpful. He had to work with the leaders, and having been close to him politically, or very close

to him politically, I felt somewhat left out in the cold and unhappy about it. It was a very good experience because I came to appreciate out of that experience what must be the feelings of people in Maine who had been close to me politically but who are necessarily and unfortunately not close to me in the day-to-day work of my office down here, and they feel left out as a result. This is a difficult problem for a fellow who gets to the top in politics. How do you keep that feeling of comradeship and closeness with your political people in the course of your day-to-day work which doesn't involve them? I must say I was on the receiving end of that and felt unhappy about it, and I think that this had a lot to do some some of Jack's problems in the Congress.

There were a lot of senators and members of the House who felt close to him. Closeness to him meant much more than closeness to other presidents, because you had a personal feeling about Jack that you didn't have about other people. Not being close to him afterwards, after having been a political comrade-in-arms, I think, had a disillusioning effect on many people here, and so there was a tendency on the part of some, I suppose, to rebel against him from time to time. There was the [George A.] Smathers relationship, for example, which added fuel to this fire. There was a tendency to think, "Well, the only way to get anything out of the President is to rebel against him once in awhile."

I submitted to that temptation once in awhile myself. I can remember an important legislative objective then was

Jack's reorganization plans for six of the regulatory commissions. As a lawyer I didn't particularly like the plans anyway because I felt that they involved too much delegation of legislative power, but I was willing to go along with most of them. The one that I felt went farther than any of the others was the plan to reorganize the Securities and Exchange Commission. There was a combination of feelings in my opposition to that. I felt here's a good chance to show my independence, and, at the same time, there's some good, sound, substantive reason for doing so.

Well, I succeeded in both counts. I think my opposition, coming as it did on the floor, rather than in committee, took the Administration's leadership by surprise, and we were able to lick the plan on the floor. It automatically got me some

attention at the White House that I thought was long overdue. [Laughter] It had only been a matter of two or three months, actually, and I guess Jack had been very busy with his new Administration. I should have been more patient and more understanding. But nevertheless, I cite this incident because I think it was typical of the reaction of a lot of people on the Hill, not only immediately in his Administration, but throughout his Administration. It was a difficult problem for him to handle. I think that he did pretty well by and large, and I think that considering the difficulties, the closeness of his election and so on, that he compiled a good legislative record.

I had another problem through this period with people in Maine. When Eisenhower was President I tried to make my criticisms

measured and responsible and avoid outright partisanship. Now, the reverse of that problem was that with a Democratic president I had to also indicate some independence from a political point of view. My inclination was to support Jack all of the time, because our political philosophies were very similar, but I thought that politically I had to indicate some independence some of the time, and how to draw this line was a difficult one. The occasions that I used were not too many, but it might be helpful to indicate what they were.

There was the Trade Expansion Act, for example. I had shared the feeling with many Senators, prior to the 1962 session of Congress that renewal of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act would be a difficult legislative challenge.

It seemed to me there was a growing tide of protectionism here in the Senate, and currently in the House as well. In my own state there was increasing concern about textile imports and about shoe imports, and the pressures to do something about it were pretty strong in my state. There were similar pressures developing in other states according to senators with whom I talked. Jack, of course, went beyond reciprocal trade agreements and presented the Trade Expansion Act. I was concerned, not so much with the objective of expanded trade with which I am in complete sympathy and always have been, but I was concerned that we develop some meaningful policy to enable import sensitive industries to adjust to the objective of expanded trade. I didn't think we ought to open our doors wide overnight to anybody and anything

that wanted to come into our markets and believed there should be effective adjustment provisions. I did not feel that the Trade Expansion Act, as it was originally proposed, offered meaningful provisions to this end, and I think that the benefit of hindsight confirms my concern. I had introduced a bill called the Ordinary Marketing Bill in the previous year with the support of the Maine shoe industry, which was patterned somewhat on the philosophy of the cotton textile agreements which Jack had negotiated for the cotton textile industry, and I wanted to see this concept written into the Trade Expansion Act. But [Myer] Mike Feldman, who was handling these matters for the President in the White House, had absolutely no sympathy for this, and so I got no sympathy from the President who naturally

relied on Mike.

So when the bill came over from the House -- the House approved it first, as it must -- I decided to offer an Ordinary Marketing Amendment to the Trade Expansion Act, and I drafted it in such a way that some very specific statistical showings would trigger the relief provisions. By this time the protection sentiment in the Senate had begun to roll again. It hadn't on the House side, and the bill passed the House rather easily. But as is so often the case with controversial matters, the second House that handles them takes the beating. This was true, incidentally, with the Landrum-Griffin Act. We passed it in the Senate relatively easily, but then the House had to take the beating.

So I introduced this just before the Committee, the Finance Committee, began

its markup sessions, and this stirred some concern in the White House again. Finally, Mike Feldman, who had been less than cool about the whole thing, cooperated with me and with the Committee staff to write in an Orderly Marketing provision which recognized the principle but which, since the bill was enacted, has gone the way of the other adjustment provisions of the bill and proved to be meaningless, principally because the Tariff Commission has taken the position that unless the economic problems of an industry are directly traceable in major part to trade agreements that no relief can be provided. But, in any case, I cite this simply as illustrative of first, my need to show an independent stance as far as the Administration is concerned, and also, as illustrative of the way in which I

chose to indicate opposition, not in criticism or in outright opposition, but in a constructive way.

I had another opportunity to indicate opposition at the time that the Berlin Wall was built. I was invited to go to Berlin a week or two after the Wall was erected to do a television program for Reader's Digest, and so I was able to talk to a lot of people, including Mayor [Willy] Brandt and our own people there, when their recollections were still fresh about the events leading up to it. I felt that we should have moved and moved quickly to stop the Russians, and I was convinced that if we had, they would have pulled back and we would have won a major foreign policy victory. I was under the impression that the reason the President did not move quickly was because he felt he had to consult with our allies and

consultation was so time consuming that by the time he'd lined up his ducks with our allies, it was too late to take advantage of the psychological moment to deter the Russians.

I don't know enough about what went on in our communications with our allies to identify any reason or any blame which falls to anybody for the failure to take advantage of it, but I had the very strong feeling that we lost an opportunity, and I said this as constructively as I could in a newsletter back home. So this was the attitude I took with Jack throughout his Administration, to maintain an independent stance that would appeal to my people back home, while at the same time, cooperating constructively to help him get success here.

He made it very easy to communicate

with him and with his Administration. I had excellent cooperation from the staff. He was particularly helpful to us in connection with our Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project. He'd always been sympathetic to this, and the developments in his Administration which have a bearing upon the project are these: that in the Eisenhower Administration, 1956-57, with a Democratic Congress, an economic survey of Passamaquoddy had been authorized at a cost of 3 million dollars to be done by the International Joint Commission.

The Commission reported finally in April of 1961, and its report was unfavorable to the Quoddy project. This then created some concern for me, both politically and because of my interest in the project. One, coming as it did in the Kennedy Administration, though it originated

before, this looked like a rebuff by the Kennedy Administration to the uninformed, and secondly, I felt that the International Joint Commission overlooked some things. So I asked the President if he wouldn't refer this whole thing to Secretary [Stewart L.] Udall for reexamination and review.

Well, he did, of course. He was very happy to do so, and communication between my office and the White House during that period was of the most reassuring kind. They were willing to listen, willing to give us all kinds of assistance and so the thing moved forward, and in June of 1963 Udall was ready to report and his report was favorable.

So the question then was what stand should the President take on this. Would he simply submit the report to the agencies who get the usual evaluation process started?

Well, he understood that that might very well be fatal, that he might very well run head on into the Budget Bureau and FPC, so that he chose instead to hold a Rose Garden ceremony in which he publicly endorsed the report as he received it from Secretary Udall. I think without that the project might well have died because, subsequently, opposition did raise its ugly head in the executive agencies, and we had our difficulties. But the momentum which he gave us with that ceremony -- that public endorsement was very important to us and was a significant factor in the present situation, Congress having approved and authorized the St. John River Project which was part of the St. John-Quoddy complex. So we think we're well on the way. We still have our battles ahead of us, but Jack left us a very important legacy on this one.

There were, of course, other controversial issues of more national importance under the Kennedy Administration here in the Congress. Perhaps, in my judgment, the most significant and important one, and one of the most difficult ones, was the Test Ban Treaty, which I regard as a high mark in his record. I thought it was very well managed by the President and the Administration. It was newsworthy and got a lot of attention because of the importance of the thing and because of the vigorousness of the opposition and the tactics used by the opposition and the right-wing accusations that were made against the Test Ban Treaty, but it went through fairly easily.

Some of the President's tax bills didn't do so well. I remember the proposal to withhold taxes on dividends and interest which, I think, was perhaps the most emotional

issue that we've had since I've been in the Senate. It wasn't important, of course, but I've never seen an issue generate the mail that that one did in this office, and the President had to back off on it.

One of these issues in which I found myself involved because of my committee assignments was the question of the Department of Urban Affairs. I forget what title we had for it in 1961-62, but I recall that one of my first conversations with the President on it took place at the head table of the testimonial dinner for Warren [G.] Magnuson in Seattle -- was it 1962?

MORRISSEY: I think it was '62.

MUSKIE: A number of our senators had gone out to participate in this testimonial to Maggie who was to run the next year. The President

had timed his participation in it with some non-political chores he was going to do out there -- a speech at the University of Washington, an honorary degree. From there he went on to a testimonial to Carl Hayden in Arizona which we also attended.

But at the head table I went up to speak to him, and we got into a discussion about what ought to be done in the field of civil rights. You recall that at that time a major policy decision he had to make was whether or not to push ahead on the legislative front or to push ahead on the administrative front. And you recall that in the campaign he had made much of the point that it would take only the stroke of the pen to move ahead on civil rights in the housing field. And so at that time in Seattle he was still bothered

by this problem of whether or not in the next session of the Congress we ought to move ahead on the legislative front or still work on the administrative front. He was inclined at that point to do something in between, that is, to push for a Department of Urban Affairs which we felt we needed anyway and to appoint a Negro to be the Secretary.

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

This wasn't a long conversation at the table because it was in between the meal and the time for the formal program, but it was interesting to me that this should have been uppermost in his mind, and it's also obvious that sometime about that time he finally resolved the issue and decided not to push for substantive civil rights legislation, but to move ahead with the Department of Urban Affairs which he

fully expected would end up with a Negro as the first Secretary.

I'd like to make some comment on this. As I say, this proposal came before my Committee on Government Operations, and since I seemed to be the only member of the Committee who had the time to devote to the problem and the interest in it, despite the fact that I come from a non-urban state, I handled the legislation in committee and drafted large parts of it. Unfortunately, we never got to the floor with the bill, because, prior to that time, the strategy was shifted to submit an executive reorganization plan rather than to rely on legislation, and I'll turn to that in a minute.

But I'd like to comment on this question of who raised the issue of [Robert C.] Weaver's appointment as the first Secretary. There's been a great deal of comment since

that time, particularly immediately after the defeat on this issue, that the President lost because he tied this question of Weaver's appointment to the plan. Well, I take issue with this because, actually, the issue of Weaver's appointment was raised first by the opposition to the plan as a means of defeating it. Long before the President announced in the press conference that he intended to appoint Weaver as the first Secretary, the opposition was using this in committee, outside of committee, in the Congress, and throughout the country, to defeat the plan. I know, because I was in the thick of this. What the President did at the press conference was simply to bring out in the open what the opposition had been using quietly. Then, of course, the opposition conveniently switched to the attack to make it appear that the

President had raised this issue and not they. But it was clear from the beginning that this was going to be difficult because of this tie with Weaver. And the interesting thing is -- it's rather ironical that the President had decided to pursue this route on civil rights in order to avoid a legislative showdown on civil rights, but he got the legislative showdown, nevertheless, because of the tie-in with Weaver.

Now on the question of this new department, long before an effort was made in the Congress, the question was debated as to whether or not the legislative route should be followed or the reorganization plan route should be followed. I felt that it should be the legislative route. And I felt so because over the years that this proposal had been pending in the

Congress, and it had been pending all the time that I was in the Senate, a great many phony arguments were advanced against it, as they always are against the creation of any new department -- the fears of bigger spending, the fears of dictation of municipal affairs, the fears that this is a way of taking the community life away from the jurisdiction of the states. All these phony arguments had been raised, and I thought that the best way to offset those arguments was through a careful series of hearings and then the drafting of legislation which could be responsive to and take the thunder out of these arguments. And in the preceding session of the Congress, we moved on the legislative route to the point where we got the bill on the Senate calendar, and it was there when the Congress came in -- again I'm not sure of my years. January

January of '62, wasn't it?

MORRISSEY: I think so.

MUSKIE: Yes. Or '61. Whatever it was, it was a holdover, and it was agreed by the agency and by the Senate subcommittee to pursue this legislative route. But then, because of difficulties which loomed in the House, it was decided to pursue the executive reorganization route.

Well, that decision having been made, for reasons that I can understand, we were willing to follow it, but a mistake was made here that perhaps would have made no difference, but which gave the opposition ammunition on the Senate side that I didn't think we should have given them. While the Senate Committee was considering the reorganization, and we had the votes to sustain the Administration in committee, it was decided to try and discharge the

Committee on the Senate floor in order to get a Senate vote before the House vote. As I recall, that was the order of events.

In other words, the Senate Committee had held hearings on the plan. We were ready to hold executive sessions and to vote, but in the meantime, events on the House side had moved to the point where a vote was likely to come before the Senate Committee could report out, and it seemed important to get a Senate vote which was more likely to be favorable than the House, as a psychological boost to the Administration's efforts on the House side.

I understood the objective, but, nevertheless, I felt that to undertake to discharge a committee which gave no evidence of dilatoriness, no evidence of dragging its feet, would give the opposition an emotional

issue on the Senate floor which would be fatal on the Senate side and destroy any chance of passage. In other words, I didn't think that it was possible to do on the Senate side what the Administration would have liked to do to influence the House side, and that's the way it turned out. John [L.] McClellan came on the floor with the posture of righteous indignation, which no one can raise more effectively than he can, trembling voice, outstretched arm, you know, and succeeded in mobilizing the Senate support so that the motion to discharge the Committee was defeated and we were at the end of the line. We never did get a vote in the Senate on the reorganization plan. The legislation stayed on the Senate calendar for the remainder of Congress, and no effort was ever made to take it off, and the House vote was unfavorable.

I guess, all things considered, it was just not the time at that point to get favorable action. But nevertheless, I didn't think we used the time that we had available as well as we might have.

There was one other interesting personal development out in Seattle. There was a vacancy at that time on the Maritime Commission. It was a Republican vacancy, and I had a good friend by the name of [James V.] Jim Day, who used to be and still is very active in American Legion affairs and who is a liberal Republican who has not been unfriendly to me, whom I wanted to see appointed to the Maritime Commission. I recognized that it would be a difficult thing to do. Maine is a small state, and, of course, Warren Magnuson is a power in this field, so I really wasn't very optimistic about it.

But Jim had some things going for him. First of all, he was a wartime buddy of [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien, and then he had a lot of strong Legion friends nationally, including Louis [A.] Johnson, who used to be Secretary of Defense. Then, of course, I thought it was important, first, because Jim is a good personal friend, but also I felt that here was a good way for the President to strengthen his position with Maine Republicans. So when we were out in Seattle, I went up to the President's suite. Larry O'Brien took me aside and he said, "Now look, Magnuson is going to be up here in this room, and I'll be here." He said, "Why wouldn't this be a good time for you to bring up this Jim Day thing? After all, Maggie will be in a pretty good glow with this profitable fund-raising dinner. The President has come out. There

won't be a better time." So sure enough, while we were sitting around chatting, I brought this up. Magnuson said, "There you go. You come right into my own state and steal this appointment [laughter] out of my hand." He said, "That's all right, Mr. President. It's okay with me." So the appointment went through, and Jim went on and he has since been reappointed by President Johnson, also the Magnuson's support. The thing worked out very well.

Switching to another theme, never really had much social contact with Jack. The Kennedys move in a different social field than I do. I always felt the warmest of feelings for him and enjoyed his friendship as well as his political comradeship and support. The one or two times that I was involved with him socially I enjoyed it very much.

I mention one in particular because I think it's a rather amusing story that ought not to be lost. He had decided to go to Maine for a weekend of sailing off the Maine Coast. There really isn't any better place in the world to sail than off that beautiful coast, and I know Teddy likes to go up there for the same reason, and Bobby. Jack invited me to join him for the weekend, and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed it, but the thing that ought not to be lost to history, perhaps ought not to be revealed to history too soon, was the first night we had dinner. There were only six of us there. There was Jack, and [James A.] Jim Reed, who then as the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, and [Paul B., Jr.] Red Fay, who was then Assistant Secretary of Navy, and [Benjamin A., II] Ben Smith, who was the Massachusetts

Senator following Jack, and [Charles F.] Chuck Spalding, who was an old college classmate of his, and that was it.

After dinner Jack went up to his room to do some work and to rest, and just before bedtime he wanted to chat so he asked us to come up. When we went up he was in the tub taking a warm bath, for his back probably and also to refresh himself, so we found ourselves standing around the bathtub. I thought this was a good time to bring up a problem that was rather troublesome to me. We were concerned about the balance of payments problem then, as we have been since, and I'd got hold of a piece of information that I thought might be helpful. I've since found that this sort of information is offered from time to time by various people and that it's always probed without any success. But I was

told that there was possibly a billion dollars in illegal gold available in various parts of the country, and people had acquired it in one way or another over the years and didn't know how to shake themselves loose of it. I was told that all they wanted really was amnesty from the criminal laws that were applicable and they could make this gold available. It would be very helpful in the balance of payments problem.

So this was what we discussed with the President around his tub close to midnight of that day, and he suggested a course of action for me to follow which I did, but which was fruitless. This is very interesting. Someday I'd like to run down all of the approaches of this kind that have been made from time to time since the hoarding of gold was outlawed, by

various people. I don't know whether there is such a hoard of gold available, but I certainly have never been able to get very close to it in behalf of the government, and I was just concerned because this information had been given to me and if I were to treat it as an old wives' tale and it didn't turn out to be, I might find myself embarrassed. So I thought I'd share the burden of this information with the President of the United States himself.

I ran into it one more time, subsequent to that and in a very curious fashion, and it turned out that my willing informant on that subsequent occasion was also connected with the informants on the previous occasions. Again the thing folded, so I don't know how much of this gold, if any, there is available. I must say that at the time I was rather struck by the curious situation

of finding myself in the President's bathroom while he was taking a bath discussing the balance of payments problem.

My last personal contact with the President was a month before he died. As is the case with all Senators or members of Congress, of course, anytime that we can get the President to come to our state, why, we are delighted to have him. I had made no approaches those last few months because I knew he was busy and we were tied up here in Congress. I hesitated to impose additional burdens, but it happened that he was planning a trip to Boston and, being very thoughtful, he sent up word that, if we could find a suitable occasion in Maine, he'd be delighted to come to Maine. It would have to be non-political because time would be so short and the expense to the Democratic Party of assuming the cost of flying Air Force One to Maine would be too great.

So we toyed with this one. The weekend that he suggested first was the weekend of the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner and this would have been very tough for us because to have him in Maine without coming to our Democratic fund-raising dinner would have been an almost impossible thing to handle. So we finally arranged for him to come to the University of Maine at the University of Maine Homecoming football game. The University was delighted to invite him.

I must say that was a tremendous success. The University has since sent me down a color movie that they took at that affair, and the entire speech is on with color. They made quite a production of it -- the notification of his plan to come, the preparations at the University for him, the erection of stands and the speakers' stands, the rehearsals with the

Secret Service people and the helicopters. It was done, of course, -- finally edited and polished up after the assassination, so there was a bit of that built into the film. But it was tremendous.

In the light of everything I told you about the religious issue in 1960 and all of the doubts we had about the impact upon his candidacy and on our own, in retrospect I have relished the fact that he came to Maine a month before his death and received such a warm greeting. You can see it in the film; you can sense it in the film; and it rubbed off on all of us, and that, of course, always gives you a glow. He chose the occasion to give a major foreign policy speech which I thought was great because there were predictions in advance that when he came up he would promise us Quoddy again and make a purely political pitch which he

didn't. As a matter of fact, he gave us a speech he planned to give at another institution of learning a week later, before the Maine trip had been planned, and so we were just delighted and he was warmly greeted. He was in good form. He took the occasion also to fly up over Passamaquoddy. This was the only gesture that he made to political expediency. He then went down to Boston, and I went with him to the Harvard-Columbia football game that afternoon. That picture was taken there. [pointing] I've often wondered -- you haven't seen it. It's a very amusing picture.

MORRISSEY: I don't see where you're pointing.

MUSKIE: Right here. The picture was sent to me after the assassination by the Boston Herald ^{Herald} Harold. It was taken with a telephoto lens. Now, it looks as though there is

a young lady huddled with the President and me enjoying a story or joke. Well, actually, she was seated off to my right about three feet in front of us. I don't know who she is. I'm sure she didn't hear a thing that we were saying, and I'm sure that she'd be delighted to have a copy of this picture if she knew of its existence. [Laughter] So whenever my wife sees that, she wants to know, "who was that pretty girl with you and the President?" Well, that was almost exactly a month from the assassination.

I suppose I ought to close with what perhaps others have -- with what I was doing on November twenty-second. I never did see the President again after that Harvard-Columbia game. I was in Maine. My reelection campaign was just around the corner in '64, and we were already planning a fund-raising dinner. On November twenty-second at noon

we were having a luncheon at the Eastland Hotel in Portland with people we had assembled to form the fund-raising team. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, businessmen, labor people -- it was really quite an unusual gathering of about twenty-five or thirty. The group had just eaten lunch and had just started to discuss their plans. I had left so they could do so freely. As I was sitting out in the lobby of the Eastland Hotel, an American Legion group was meeting, and they came over to say "hello." One of them came to me and said, "Did you hear the President was shot?" I said, "What are you doing? Pulling my leg?" Of course, they insisted that they were not. At that point, the manager of the television station, which was on the roof of the hotel, came looking for me to tell me that this was in fact the case and

invited me to go up there to watch what was going on.

So I went into the meeting of my fund raisers and told them what had happened, and that broke up that group and we didn't assemble again for a couple of months. We all went up to the television studios. It was, of course, a moving experience that none of us will ever forget, and then immediately after his death was confirmed, I was on television to try to react and I must say I never had a more difficult chore to perform than that one. I have a tape of that, too, which I've never been able to bring myself to look at since it happened.

Then I, like all members of Congress, felt I ought to get back to Washington, and it happened that a Navy MATS plane was on its way down from New Brunswick to Washington, so I hitched a ride -- it was

an old "Connie" with bucket seats and it wasn't too comfortable -- and pulled into Washington about the same time that Air Force One came in from Texas. I'm sure I can't add anything about my own feelings in the next three or four days that you haven't heard many, many times. The future looked pretty black in so many ways.

MORRISSEY: We have the White appointment books at the Archives. I went through and pulled out the occasions you were there, a couple of which you have already mentioned, the Orono trip in October, 1963, and the Johns Island trip earlier. Do you have any specific recollections of any of those other visits to the White House?

MUSKIE: Well, the meetings of August 31, 1962, and January 18, 1963, both had to do with the wool textile problem. Wait a minute. When was that cotton textile agreement negotiated?

MORRISSEY: I don't know.

MUSKIE: We negotiated before the Trade Expansion Act was enacted. That's right, so it was negotiated in 1961, because until that was out of the way the President felt he was in trouble with the Trade Expansion Act. So in 1962 we were concerned about wool textiles, and we still are. The President had made a commitment that he would undertake to get for the wool textile industry and for synthetics, also, the same kind of agreement that he'd been able to negotiate for cotton. He got a lot of pressure to handle the whole problem at once, but other countries, of course, would not agree, and the cotton textile agreement was the most difficult because it involved the most countries -- I think nineteen in all, whereas wool involved maybe three or four. So the President felt he ought to

move ahead with cotton and then do his best to follow up with wool. The meeting in August of 1962, I'm sure, had to do with wool and was for the purpose -- this apparently was shortly after the enactment of the Trade Expansion Act -- of indicating to the President my desire that he move ahead as quickly as possible with his wool textile agreement. The wool textile people had held off any opposition to the Trade Expansion Act. The cotton textile people, of course, had held off because they had gotten what they wanted, and the wool textile people felt that they ought to press their commitment as quickly as possible, and that's what that meeting was all about. The senators who attended were simply representatives of a larger group.

There is an interesting anecdote. This meeting of seventeen was held in

the Cabinet Room and Norris Cotton was the only Republican who deigned to join us, and he felt, obviously, that he ought to explain how he, a Republican, happened to be there in such a Democratic company. He said -- these are almost his exact words -- he said, "Mr. President, I came down here because I've heard a lot of talk and a lot of promises about this textile problem from other Presidents in Republican administrations, and I just want to say that you are the first person to do anything concrete in the cotton textile industry." He said, "I came down here to tell you that I appreciate that fact. I would not say this publicly, of course, but that's why I'm here and also to support the mission of these other senators." Well, Cotton has never said that publicly since, and he's criticized the Democratic Administration since, but that's what he said then. [Laughter]

Then, of course, the meeting in January of 1963 was for the same purpose, and we are still having such meetings in the present Administration and the wool industry is still in worse shape than it was then.

I went down many times with him, many times on that textile problem. As a matter of fact, there must have been one earlier. I can't recall what this July meeting of 1961 was, unless it was that -- July 6, 1961. That was on cotton textiles at the time and on the Portsmouth Navy Yard problem. Yes, that one on July 6, 1961, was a very interesting one, from the point of view of Maine and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Margaret [Chase] Smith, in the mid-1950's, introduced legislation to achieve a long-cherished objective of the workers of the Portsmouth-Kittery Naval Shipyard,

and that was pay scales equal to those of the Boston Yard. She introduced legislation to do this, and Lyndon Johnson helped her get it through a couple of times. He and Margaret have always had a close relationship, and she often gave him support on issues on the floor where an additional vote was important to him, and he reciprocated by helping her with her projects.

President Eisenhower pocket-vetoed one of those bills to achieve equalization. I think he actually vetoed another. I'm not sure of that, but in any case, she'd managed to get it through the Congress at least once, and, I think, twice, and then it was vetoed once and I think pocket-vetoed another time. In any case it hadn't become law.

So this was a recurring issue in southwestern Maine and New Hampshire in

election after election, and when President Kennedy was campaigning in New Hampshire in 1960, he held a press conference and he was asked about this. He said, "Why, it would only take a stroke of a pen to achieve that. You don't need legislation." Implied in this, of course, was his promise that he'd see that it was done. Well, I've never made such an outright promise as that, you know, because I recognized some of the difficulties, but he had. In January of 1961 I thought, "Well, if we're going to get this done let's get it done." I was planning a trip into Maine in February of that year, and I said this would be good news to take up there. I got in touch with the White House and said, "this is what the President promised and why don't we get that stroke of the pen and get this done." Well, the President, of course,

found, as is so often the case, that once you take office these things aren't as easily done as you might like.

So we launched a long series of meetings with Mike Feldman, with Red Fay, with the admirals in the Defense Department, and with others on this issue. The President found that it wasn't quite this simple for this simple reason that there's no such thing as a uniform blue collar wage for defense installations, and that if you undertook to establish uniformity between Portsmouth and Boston, then you'd have pressure for establishing uniformity among other installations and eventually for a uniform national wage, which wouldn't make any sense because, if you then achieve that, then people in high-cost areas would begin to pressure for exceptions to recognize the cost of living differentials. In other words, it

was a vicious circle. The only justification for an exception in the case of Portsmouth and Boston was that they at one time had been tied together on wage levels just before the War, and this tie had been broken some-time since and we wanted to reestablish it.

I'm sure that this meeting on July 6, 1961, was a meeting with the President to try to get the problem before him and to get some support from him for doing something. By that time he recognized that his promise wasn't well based, and so what he initiated at that meeting was a program for at least closing the gap in some of the wage levels and closing the overall gap in a way that it would at least be a recognition of his promise.

Of course, since that time the issue has been made moot by the decision to

eventually close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard over a ten-year period, and so matters of more urgency preoccupy the workers in the yard than this wage level differential. But it was a very serious thing with me at the time, because Margaret, during that six-month period, publicly reminded the workers from time to time of the President's promise, put the monkey on my back for pressuring the President to meet his promise, and it was quite an embarrassing situation for a long time.

The meeting of January 18, 1963, I'm sure, was just another meeting on that wool textile problem. I'm sure the meeting of March 14, 1963, was the same. There was also the meeting of July 30, 1963. There were other meetings which are not on here. I don't know why not.

MORRISSEY: Were they held in the Oval Office?

MUSKIE: Yes. Not with any special significance.

I can't recall anything in connection with unemployment that would be of importance. But it's of interest that not all of them are here. I don't know why that would be so.

MORRISSEY: I don't either.

MUSKIE: But I can see that we were most preoccupied with textiles, and we were. I never liked to bother the President unless all other means of getting something done failed. First, because I know how busy he is; secondly, because I wanted to preserve the value of my contact with the President. If I'm talking to him every day in the week and then I have some really pressing problem, he is not going to be as impressed with its urgency if he has talked to me several times that week about something

else. I hadn't realized how religiously I followed that policy until I saw this list. I do the same thing with President Johnson, and I think it's a good policy to follow, but obviously it isn't a policy that other senators follow.

MORRISSEY: When you were talking about the ratification of the Test Ban Treaty, I was reminded to ask if the poor relationship between your colleague, Senator Smith, and John Kennedy, when he was President, continued during his presidency.

MUSKIE: Yes. She liked him personally, we know, and who could help it. For example, on his visit to Maine -- well, he made two visits to Maine, of course, while he was President -- one, the Johns Island trip and the second one, the University of Maine trip.

On the second one we flew over

Passamaquoddy. Of course, she flew up from Washington on the plane with us, and the President invited us to come up into his compartment. There was no feeling of hostility at all in their personal relationship that I could sense. And Margaret has a way of being cool that can be very unpleasant, but there was none of that. She was obviously glad to be with him and they were able to converse in a friendly fashion, but I don't think she ever forgave him politically for that 1954 campaign. As a matter of fact, she made at least one speech -- I think it was to a Republican Womens gathering here in Washington. It may have been to a Women's Press Club meeting. I'm not sure. But it was really quite a vicious political attack on the President.

And then, of course, she was very

unhappy because of the policy that she thought existed of giving Democratic senators lead time on notices of federal action in their states. She was unhappy about that. Actually, this didn't amount to a great deal, and the only time I ever took advantage of the opportunity to put out stories in advance was when I worked on a project.

I can remember a very amusing development in this connection. She had written a letter to either the President or Larry O'Brien protesting this policy, this alleged policy, wanting to know who had leaked information with respect to a particular contract. I forget whether it involved in the Saco-Lowell Gun contract in Biddeford [Maine] or a submarine assignment to Portsmouth. But anyway, she wrote protesting the fact that I

had given this information, made the announcement before she had the information, and she wanted to know whether or not there was such a policy and who had given me the information. Larry called me and said, "Now what do we do about this?" Well, I said, "I'll tell you what. You write me a letter indicating that you've had this request and asking me who gave me the information. I will write you a letter telling you that it's none of your business." I said, "You can use that anyway that you want." That's the way we handled it. [Laughter] He never again got a protest from her. So she was very unhappy about that; I thought unrealistically so. However, most of the time that we had a Republican Administration she didn't have a Democratic colleague. I don't suppose she realized that this was a

Republican policy as well as a Democratic policy. I don't actually try to take advantage of whatever the policy may be unless it's something that I have something to do with. If it's a sugar beet allotment to Maine which I feel I'm responsible for getting, and I've been in close contact with the agency and I've known of developments and worked on the project, then I figure I've got a right to disclose what information I have, but if it's simply a routine announcement of the allocation of some money on an ARA project or something else, I couldn't be less interested. I don't think people are impressed by the fact that you put out such an announcement before anybody else. But this was a very sore point with Senator Smith, and this, coupled with that 1954 thing, made her

very unfriendly politically to the President. I don't really believe that this is what influenced her vote on the Test Ban Treaty. I don't believe any Senator would be motivated by such considerations in such a vital matter. I think that she didn't believe in the Test Ban Treaty and that you've got to accept her vote at face value.

Senator Smith, of course, has had a knack for getting maximum attention focused on a key vote which she has cast from time to time, like the vote of the [Lewis L.] Strauss nomination and this Test Ban vote, and I think maybe one or two others in her career. But I think she casts all of them on the basis of her convictions. Of course, from time to time conviction gives you margin on both sides of an issue. [Laughter]

On the Test Ban Treaty I don't think this had anything to do with it.

President Johnson, of course, had a personal relationship with Senator Smith that Jack never had. She tends to be a loner for reasons that have to do with her personality, I suppose, and the habits of a lifetime.

She fought the Republican machine in Maine in order to get elected, first to Congress and then to the Senate, so she's never been close to the Republican organization in Maine. She's a loner on both sides of the political fence. She was never, I thought, close to the Eisenhower Administration. She never allows herself to become that involved with anybody, but with Jack she had these two special counts against him.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned Jim Day as a State of

Mainer who was appointed to the Maritime Commission. Are there any other people from your state appointed to high Administration positions?

MUSKIE: No, not outside the state. Of course, we managed to get agreement on all the appointments within the state. I did try very hard to get the President to appoint our Commissioner of Education in Maine as the Federal Commissioner of Education. He's a good man, Warren Hill, who has since left the state and he is president of Trenton (N.J.) State College. I think he would have been a good man, and the President seriously considered him. I know we discussed it at the time of the America Cup Races in Newport in 1962. The President was giving serious thought to it but ultimately selected somebody else. You really

wouldn't have too many candidates from Maine itself for many of these top-flight appointments, and I hesitate to get involved with too many candidates from outside the state for major appointments. I think you have just so much good will in the bank with the President on these things, and I try to spend it as carefully as I can.

Maine, after all, politically can't justify too much control over these things. I know the last time Jim Day's appointment was up -- this has nothing to do with President Kennedy's Administration -- there was some effort to get President Johnson to appoint a Maine man, now the chairman of our Public Utilities Commission, to the FCC. Was that it? I think so. But in any case, I was more interested in getting Jim reappointed than in trying

to get another Maine man on. I think I was wise, but Senator Smith tried to make capital of the fact that I didn't push this other fellow. She said, "Why, Maine was big enough to deserve more than one major Federal appointment."

But remember, too, that I was a freshman senator through all this period, and I couldn't expect too much consideration. I think that Jack gave me more than I might normally expect from the President of my own party, although President Johnson has found new and ingenious ways of helping his supports on the Hill.

I'd say, looking back on President Kennedy's relations with the Congress, that one of his greatest problems may very well have been perhaps an subconscious desire on the part of senators and congressmen to have a personal relation

with him that he couldn't possibly give them and a feeling of frustration that it wasn't there. Conversely, I think this is one of the reasons for Johnson's success. He has managed to create the impression of a personal relationship with more members of the Congress than could possibly have substance. It's an odd thing.

MORRISSEY: Were you at the 1960 Convention?

MUSKIE: Yes, I was there. After that Wisconsin thing I never did play a very close role in the President's campaign, his campaign for the nomination, so I didn't have much of a role in play out at the Convention.

MORRISSEY: Did the news of the vice presidential selection cause any problems in the Maine delegation?

MUSKIE: No, not really. It came as a shock, I

must say, although I felt after the initial shock that it was a very smart move. I never questioned it. At that time, the history of my relations with President Johnson hadn't been very bright. We had never gotten along well at all. But nevertheless, like Jack, I recognized his ability and his political value. I thought it was a wise choice. As a matter of fact, my respect for Jack's political acumen and judgment shot up. If a fellow can do this in spite of the personal relationships and the bitterness that had been developed, he's a good man. I think this is a great tribute to him.

MORRISSEY: Since his margin of victory was so slight in 1960, did he ever comment to you about what he wanted to do to make sure it was a lot larger in '64 and also

to reelect the so-called class of '58 which had come to the Senate in that year and was up for reelection in '64?

MUSKIE:

No. He recognized that we all had a problem, and I think we all felt we did. I think there might well have been some casualties. I don't think there was any problem in my case, and I can't really be sure from the President's standpoint whether there were with others, but my feeling was very strong that [Frank E.] Ted Moss and Gale [W.] McGee were in trouble and that others might well have been. I recall at the University of Maine function -- the affair was held on the football field outdoors, and, of course, the President was the only one to speak except for the Governor who welcomed him to the stage and the president of the University who

introduced the President. I was a little unhappy because the president of the University didn't give me a larger role in these proceedings, but he explained his position, and I could see it. In any case, he introduced each member of the delegation and for some reason I got by far the largest hand of the four members of the delegation. The President leaned over and he said, "Well, they don't have to take a Gallup poll up here. [Laughter] You look in pretty good shape."

I don't know what thought he had given to the special problems of the class of '58 except to recognize that they existed. Of course, insofar as I was concerned, his sponsorship of the Passamaquoddy project was a real help, and that may have been a part of his

thinking. Then he made that conservation swing through the West which was obviously geared to helping these boys, so I know it was very much on his mind, but I don't know and have no reason to believe that he had any special plans beyond what he had already done. I felt that he was very confident about his own chances in 1964. I felt that he was holding in reserve, however, many legislative proposals and programs that he would have liked to advance. I felt that he was treading very carefully in this business on Weaver and the new department. It was typical, I think, of his caution here. I think he felt the need to move ahead in the field of civil rights, but again had to husband his political resources carefully. I think everything he did in that three years reveals a caution geared

to that slim margin. I think he tended to be pretty realistic about these performance polls that are always run on presidents. After all, they don't run you against anybody. It's easy to approve a president. There's an inclination to approve a president's performance unless it is radically wrong. After all, we are one country and we rally behind our leader. I think the President was quite realistic about them. They, of course, were very favorable and could stimulate over-optimism, but I think he realized that once he had an opponent, things would change somewhat. And so he was careful.

As a matter of fact, I think that President Johnson learned a great deal from President Kennedy's behavior during that three-year period in that connection. I think President Johnson

is much more cautious than Kennedy was, especially considering the overwhelming mandate he got at the polls. He's much less inclined to welcome controversy on domestic issues than President Kennedy was, and perhaps all to good purpose. I think the fact that he has developed a consensus on domestic matters has helped him with his foreign problems which I wouldn't want to carry.

I never had a chance to discuss with President Kennedy any of his foreign policy problems, and he had some rough ones. I know that on the Bay of Pigs thing one thing that disturbed me was the fact that he immediately ran to President Eisenhower for advice and help. This really galled me at the time. In retrospect, I see the wisdom of having done it, but at the time it just looked

and created the appearance of a young fellow who, by God, the first time he gets in trouble, runs to the old man, and I didn't like it. But again, as I say, it turned out fine. I think he took just the right public stance on that Bay of Pigs thing. I would have liked at some time to have had an opportunity to discuss what went on before. It seems such an incredible thing to happen, if he were given good advice. I suppose we'll never know except through [Theodore C.] Sorensen's book and other books that will be written.

I thought that Jack got away very lightly on that and that this could have been catastrophic for almost anybody else. It suggested so many shortcomings as to him and his Administration and his advisers, but he did just the right thing.

He said, "The responsibility is mine," and that stopped all discussion. All right, he admits his mistake; he takes the responsibility; what else can you ask? So he worked it out very well, and of course, his own performance as he gained experience and confidence improved to the point where people forgot it. I can't recall really many presidents who could have gotten away with that one. I doubt that a [Richard M.] Nixon could have gotten away with it; I doubt that a Johnson could get away with it; but Jack did. It was a case where style really offset the lack of substance. It was a miserable, miserable, thing but then, by contrast, the Cuban Missile incident completely wiped it out. He had gotten his feet on the ground. He'd measured up to the job and was all set to go.

Oh, I think Jack had a marvelous capacity for growth. When Jack Kennedy took office as President, there certainly was no feeling in the country that a great President had stepped into office. He had won by a slim margin; he was an attractive young fellow; but there was certainly no impression of greatness at that point. Three years later he had certainly left a mark. His greatness and how history will evaluate it is hard to judge, but the fact is that he grew in that three-year period in a way that the country and the world recognized. The tragedy is that that growth was not put to the service of the country and of the world as it should have been. The growth was there. It was recognized, and I think history will always recognize that. I don't think there's been anything like it.

Johnson achieved his growth before he became the President and put it to work. I think this is a classic illustration. I can't help but believe that Kennedy's three years in office is going to be forever a bright page in American history. I saw what I thought was a very cruel analysis of Jack's Presidency written in the New York Times, I think on the anniversary last year of the assassination.

MORRISSEY: Last November.

MUSKIE: Very cruel, and there will be others like it. There's bound to be. And, of course, if you try to measure his Presidency in terms of legislative accomplishments, it was not outstanding. I think it was good in light of all the problems. In terms of concrete accomplishments there may not be enough to list him among the great presidents; but when you measure

the growth of the man and his contribution to the climate of political thinking in this country, the shift of direction for which he was responsible, the contribution to the image of the United States which he created in the world -- when you measure the whole impact of Jack Kennedy upon his country and his world, it would seem to me that this has got to live as a bright age, and I don't think I'm quite as sentimental about it as I was in the days immediately following his death.

MORRISSEY: Thank you very much.