

Millard Cass Oral History Interview—JFK#1, 7/14/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Cass, Deputy Under Secretary of Labor (1955-1971), discusses the operations of the Department of Labor and the various Secretaries of Labor that he worked under, the transition between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, and Secretary Arthur J. Goldberg's administrative style, among other issues.

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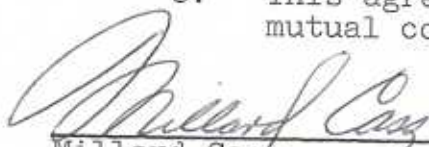
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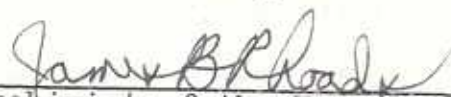
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Millard Cass



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Millard Cass—JFK #1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Millard Cass

July 14, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Cass, let me begin by asking you to sketch very, very generally your background in the Labor Department, when you first came in and so on, so that we can establish that. Then we'll move on into the transition period, into the Kennedy administration [John F. Kennedy].

CASS: I came to the Department of Labor in September 1946 as an assistant to the new assistant secretary for international labor affairs. When he became under secretary in 1947, I continued as his assistant. I remained in that role under his successor until 1950 when I became special assistant to the Secretary of Labor. In 1955, I was made deputy under secretary of labor, a position which I have held continuously since that time.

MOSS: Now what was the first contact you had with the new administration coming in? Do you recall?

CASS: Yes. Secretary-designate Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] came over to the Department of Labor prior to the new administration's taking office and met with a few of us in a room which had been made available to him by Secretary Mitchell [James P. Mitchell]. He and Secretary Mitchell were very good friends and the transition was a particularly smooth one, with cooperation extended and accepted.

MOSS: Can you tell me something of the character of the transition, what was required in the way of briefings, of introduction of the new team to personnel in the department, this kind of thing, and what responsibilities did you have in this regard?

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CASS: I did not have any formal responsibilities in this connection. Most of the people who were brought in with the new administration were already very knowledgeable with respect to the operations, policies, and personnel that they brought with them. I personally had not met some of them like Under Secretary Wirtz [Willard Wirtz] prior to their taking office. But I did know Secretary Goldberg for many years and he knew virtually all the top personnel of the Department of Labor. I did know some of the new assistant secretaries who also had a wide acquaintanceship in the department. Under Secretary Wirtz also knew many top personnel in the Department of Labor, although I was probably one of the few exceptions.

MOSS: What were the chief problems that were facing the new team coming in and how is this conveyed to them?

CASS: In the course of informal and later formal discussions with the top staff of the department that they inherited, the new team explored some of the problems which they saw. I recall as a chief problem on the list concerning them the matter of the high unemployment which existed at that time.

MOSS: Was there anything else in particular that you recall?

CASS: There were some labor-management relations problems that were old chestnuts, so to speak, and had troubled the top command of the government in the executive branch—the Department of Labor, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and the National Mediation Board—for many years. These problems were still extant at the time that the new administration took office.

MOSS: Chiefly in the transportation area, were they not?

CASS: That was the primary area of responsibility and concern, although there were still some difficult areas besides transportation.

MOSS: This is one question that we ask in connection with the transition. I'll leave it to your discretion as to how far you want to go. Were there any time bombs that the outgoing administration left that the new administration really wasn't adequately made aware of, for whatever motives or neglect?

CASS: Categorically, no. In the Department of Labor, Secretary-designate Goldberg

had even come over to a meeting of all employees which Secretary Mitchell had held. If I recall correctly, it was on January 12, 1961, but the date is subject to confirmation. The new Secretary was introduced to the employees by the outgoing secretary. They were both men who had tremendous ability and mutual respect. They had worked very closely together during the steel strike in 1959 and 1960 and this cemented a long

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friendship and a great deal of rapport.

MOSS: What was the impact of the new team on the department, on the career employees, how did they respond to the new team coming in and what sort of things was the new team doing that impressed, either adversely or positively, the career staff?

CASS: It's a little hard for one individual to really speak for a career staff so I should probably just limit my answer to the impression I had of the effect upon the career staff. In that regard, I think all of the reactions were favorable. Generally the career staff was a staff which consisted of persons who had been promoted on merit, who had a very satisfying experience under the Mitchell administration and had a tremendous respect and affection for Secretary Mitchell, for Under Secretary O'Connell [James T. O'Connell] and for the various assistant secretaries and for the job they had done. So Secretary Goldberg and his colleagues inherited a staff which had high morale, great motivation, most of them quite efficient and prepared to move quickly to respond to whatever the demands and wishes that the new administration were.

The rapport and the cooperation between the two administrations, the Mitchell administration going out and the Goldberg administration coming in, were so great that Secretary Mitchell even cleaned up a few unpleasant personnel problems which had festered for a while and needed some correction. He removed the people or accepted their resignations shortly before he left in order to have this entire matter cleaned up, so to speak, before Secretary Goldberg came in and not leave it for Secretary Goldberg to handle. I couldn't imagine a situation better calculated to serve the people of the nation than the attitudes which the outgoing and incoming secretaries brought to the transition.

MOSS: Very good, very good. Let me ask you this. There's a prevalent opinion that the incoming Kennedy administration, in general, brought with it a kind of élan, euphoria, ebullience, that was infectious and that went right on into the career staffs. How much of this is valid and how much of this is sort of public relations?

CASS: As far as the Department of Labor is concerned, it would be my observation and conclusion that this kind of attitude was brought in by the new team. It started like a relay runner who's just been handed a baton and is already moving when he gets it. They were in high gear and moving when they started in office.

There was an excitement and there was a confidence which the new team already had and which it communicated to the employees.

On the other hand, as far as the Department of Labor is concerned, it did not have a staff which was in the doldrums and needed to be buoyed up. It had a staff which was already buoyed

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up because of the great work which had been done by the Mitchell administration and the respect and affection which the staff felt for that administration. So, without generalizing beyond my own department, I would have to say, flatly and categorically, that what the new team brought in in terms of an excitement and a drive and a commitment, they found the staff very much ready for because they had been operating under that exact same kind of environment under the Mitchell administration.

MOSS Okay. You say the new team was off and running. In what directions were they running and in what ways did the new team communicate these directions to the people in the department? What were the kinds of things they were emphasizing and where did you get your clues as to what new policies, programs and so on were going to be emphasized?

CASS: Well, one of the first things that Secretary Goldberg did from my standpoint—and I can't speak for the entire department—and which showed the kind of things he was doing and which I think ultimately was communicated to the staff down, was to ask us to take a look across the board at what we would do if we were told that we had to cure the economic problems which existed at that time with the recession that had been in existence in 1960. I chaired at that time a Program Planning and Review Committee which consisted of a number of top career people from various parts of the department. We didn't build up any staff; we used the existing staffs under our own direction, and I had that group assist me in taking a look at the entire spectrum of economic planning. We came up with a wide range of possible actions which could be taken to cure whatever the problems of the nation were in the broad social-economic areas, including such matters as dealing with unemployment, youth problems, the aged, labor-management relations, et cetera.

This entire spectrum of review and alternative and possible solutions was presented to Secretary Goldberg and his top associates. From that he drew a series of policy decisions concerning areas in which he wished to move to propose programs or legislation or administrative actions. In all candor, I must note that this was not the only input he had and therefore, I cannot take credit for myself or my associates for the wide range of legislation and proposals which Secretary Goldberg or the President thereafter sent to Congress. The inputs came from his own resources, from the experience and ideas of his own colleagues whom he brought in with him, from other sources in the executive branch and in the private sector, and from friends of his in the Congress.

Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the staff of career people, it was apparent that he was looking for new ideas, that nothing that we proposed would be rejected out-of-hand, and

that we were free to be widely imaginative in the solutions to the problems which faced the nation. Then we began getting feedbacks from him in terms of the

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fact that he'd like to develop a particular program for a particular thing within a frame of reference which he gave us. Sometimes we recognized this as having been within the list of alternative proposals which we had developed in some specificity for him, sometimes they were new ideas as far as we were concerned, which obviously came from his own mind or from other sources.

MOSS: So there was something that happened at his level to all this input before it came back down to you as a decision that this was the direction that the department was going to go.

CASS: That's correct.

MOSS: Do you know anything about the nature of this decision making?

CASS: Yes, part of this was done in consultation with the new teams of top officials; part of it was in terms of consultation with individual experts within the Department of Labor; and I know that part of it went on in terms of formal and informal consultations he had with other government agencies and with White House staff. I think perhaps it would be helpful to you if I insert at this point, and then you can put it whatever point you want in the narrative, two or three facts in terms of how he set up his office, which will cast some light on this perhaps.

MOSS: Splendid.

CASS: Immediately upon coming in, Secretary Goldberg did call upon me for a wide range of advice and assistance. Many of the matters on which he consulted me had no relation to my traditional responsibilities, but I was, of course, at his disposal to assist in any way I could. In the beginning, he did not have an executive assistant and because we were old friends and he trusted me, for a few weeks he used me in that capacity and also sent me to meetings at the White House which were chaired by Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton], and from time to time by other persons, at which matters of interest to the administration were discussed. After he obtained an executive assistant, he transferred this responsibility to him in recognition of the fact, which we discussed frankly, that I was a career employee and he did not wish to have me involved in a type of activity which would have political implications and which might embarrass me in terms of my own career. Thereafter, while he used me on many occasions to attend meetings at the White House, these were meetings which had to deal with substantive matters of interest to the Department of Labor as opposed to political matters. This was a role I had performed for a number of secretaries before him and in which I was very comfortable.

I know, however, from the limited experience I had in the

political aspect of the administration's early days, that there was tremendous amount of give and take and unstructured discussion of avenues of inquiry that could be pursued for purposes of developing programs. Ideas were thrown on the table and discussed quite freely and then there was a commitment to follow it up in one agency or another, or in the White House, with respect to the development of a proposal for legislation or executive action out of that. Now I suspect that this approach continued after my brief exposure to it but I was not a party to that.

MOSS: I was going to ask you in some more detail about the Dutton group's operation, specifically whether or not it was used primarily as a clearinghouse for follow-ups on cabinet decisions or whether it had its own input. I think you've indicated that there was some individual input from this group.

CASS: It was usually both capacities during the brief period that I was associated with it. What it developed into after that I could not tell.

MOSS: Could you describe in some detail a meeting of this group, the kind of thing that went on, how often did you meet, in what room in the White House, specific things of that sort, who was attending, this kind of thing?

CASS: The meeting was in it's what they call the Fish Room in the White House. It was chaired by Fred Dutton and except for me, I think, for those few weeks, it had people who had come in with the new administration in very close relationship to the top officials of the government departments. And while I don't remember in any detail a particular subject matter, I remember the impressions in terms of its desire to move quickly and effectively into program areas as well as following through on decisions which were made by cabinet officers in individual or group meetings with the President.

MOSS: What about the size of the group? Was it a manageable size or was it crowded or what?

CASS: No, my recollection is that it was quite manageable. I don't recall having noted extreme size; it didn't have the cumbersomeness which so many government meetings have, primarily, I suppose, because there was one from an agency. What we did was we came back and reported directly to our own bosses. I was just at a few meetings of this group, and as soon as he was able to organize his office in such a fashion that he could have an exempt officer taking on this responsibility, Secretary Goldberg did this. Of course, he knew of my very close relationship with Secretary Mitchell and that I would serve in a career capacity to whoever was secretary and respected that.

MOSS: Do you have any other observations on the way that Secretary Goldberg was setting up his staff, his personal staff, and the way that it seemed to you to be developing?

CASS: Well, each secretary operates the department very differently and perhaps if I traced very briefly the nature of these operations as I have seen them, it would serve as background for appraising Secretary Goldberg's operations of the office during his tenure here.

MOSS: I think that would be very useful.

CASS: When I came to the Department of Labor, it was during the tenure of Secretary Schwellenbach [Lewis B. Schwellenbach]. He tended to operate the department on a personal basis with final decisions, more often than not, made by him directly and only delegating to his under secretary and assistant secretaries the final decisions in areas in which they had special competence. The job of under secretary of labor was created effective July 1, 1946, after Secretary Schwellenbach was already in office, and the first under secretary was Keen Johnson, former governor of Kentucky. At that time there were three assistant secretaries, two of them from the trade union movement—one of them from the AFL [American Federation of Labor] and one from the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]—and the third from the public sector, being assigned the international labor responsibilities. The assistant secretary in charge of international labor affairs was also utilized by the Secretary as an impartial official who could be a troubleshooter in areas like labor-management relations where he had tremendous expertise. As his assistant, I got into the labor-management relations areas with him which was not true of his other assistants who were hired and specializing in the international activities.

When Secretary Tobin [Maurice J. Tobin] took over, he operated in the same general fashion insofar as the top command of the department was concerned. He did, however, bring in an under secretary from the state of Massachusetts who had a background that he could utilize particularly from a political standpoint. Secretary Tobin, as you will recall, had himself been a mayor of Boston and a governor of Massachusetts and so he was far more deeply involved in political activities than Secretary Schwellenbach. Even though Secretary Schwellenbach had been a former senator, he had come to the department from a position as U.S. District Court judge in the state of Washington and had been somewhat insulated from politics in the recent past.

When Secretary Durkin [Martin P. Durkin] took over, he, for the first time as far as I was even aware, brought into the department at the assistant secretary level somebody directly from and representative of business. That was Assistant Secretary Siciliano [Rocco C. Siciliano]

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who later took on a wide range of responsibilities in the federal establishment and is today Under Secretary of Commerce. He also adopted a slightly different format in terms of representation of the assistant secretaries. Secretary Durkin was himself from the AFL side of

the labor movement and his Under Secretary Mashburn [Lloyd A. Mashburn] was also from that side of the labor movement. He brought in people who represented a wider cross section of the population than had been the case with the previous administrations.

When he left and Secretary Mitchell succeeded him, Secretary Mitchell felt quite free to bring in as the top command of the department those persons who could meet his particular needs regardless of the nature of their representation in terms of various segments of the population or the economy. He also felt free to make changes in the format of the department's top structure and the personnel of that top structure.

Now under Secretaries Schwellenbach and Tobin, the assistant secretaries, except for the one from the international affairs area, did not have line responsibility over any of the programs of the department. The bureau of directors reported directly to the under secretary. When Secretary Durkin came in, he started an assignment of line responsibility to assistant secretaries in addition to those of the assistant secretary for international activities. When Secretary Mitchell took office, he expanded and perfected this new trend in terms of line responsibilities to the assistant secretaries and really organized the department in terms of relying upon assistant secretaries to supervise most of the bureaus directly, with an overview administratively by the under secretary and with himself looking toward the big policy decisions and the external relations of the department with the Congress and with the labor movement and the remainder of the executive branch. This period also saw the establishment of the positions of deputy under secretary and deputy assistant secretary. It was Secretary Mitchell's desire in that structuring of the department to have career officers who would backstop the policy and political officials who would continue to serve any administration with complete loyalty and who would have enough background to serve with a continuity which would help the new officials as they came in.

Secretary Goldberg built upon this existing structure and retained the career officials and specifically, the ones who were there and had been appointed by Secretary Mitchell as the backstops to the policy and political officials. He also continued an arrangement which Secretary Mitchell had initiated the first sub-cabinet position in the United States government which went to a black man was during Secretary Mitchell's administration. Secretary Goldberg continued this by bringing in a black man as an assistant secretary.

MOSS: This was George Weaver [George L-P. Weaver] in the international field.

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CASS: Yes, George Weaver in the international field, which is the same area, incidentally, in which Secretary Mitchell had first broken the ice by bringing in a Negro, Assistant Secretary Wilkins [J. Ernest Wilkins] at that time. But Secretary Goldberg also brought in a particularly well-balanced team from the standpoint of ethnic, religious, and geographic, and economic backgrounds. And I suspect that this was by conscious design. You don't put together that kind of team unless you have tried to do it. He also, very early in his administration, expanded upon something which Secretary Mitchell had done. Secretary Mitchell had made the director of the Women's Bureau a special assistant to the secretary as well as director of the Women's Bureau, which for the first time, except for Mrs. Perkins's [Frances Perkins] position as Secretary of Labor, put a woman in

the top echelon of the department of Labor. Secretary Goldberg obtained the approval of the Congress as well as the President for an additional assistant secretary of labor position and upgraded the job to assistant secretary of labor and director of the Women's Bureau.

Now, as far as Secretary Goldberg was concerned, he continued what other secretaries had had, an individual who gave special attention to legislative liaison relations with the Hill and political matters of that kind. But more than any secretary, as far as I know in the history of the department, he was his own legislative liaison. He made it a point to go up to the Hill constantly to meet with senators and congressmen. He negotiated with them directly, face to face. He worked out with the leadership of the Congress through personal consultation—as opposed to through his own staff or through White House liaison personnel—the necessary arrangements to promote his own legislative packages, to make such compromises or accommodations as were necessary in order to get them through, and to line up the congressional support for them. When a piece of legislation involving the Department of Labor was on the Hill, Secretary Goldberg might be in the Speaker's office or in the majority leader's office of the Senate, and be available for consultation instantaneously with leaders of the floor fight for his legislation concerning whether a particular amendment was acceptable to him or not, whether any amendment should be offered by the administration forces or not. I remember an occasion when I happened to be with him when he was engaged in one of these legislative battles and his presence in the wings, so to speak, was the deciding factor in getting the legislation through because compromises were worked out instantaneously by people who left the floor for a few minutes, talked to him and found out what he would accept and how he would handle it and went back to the fray knowing exactly how far they could go and what they could not do.

MOSS: Would you pinpoint the specific piece of legislation?

CASS: Well, this had to do with the program involving the Neighborhood Youth Corps, at that point. But my understanding was that he did this with respect to all of his legislation.

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He also never sent other people to deal with important members of the Congress when he could arrange to do it himself. They came to his office; he went to their offices. He'd think nothing of picking up and running to the Hill for fifteen or twenty minutes to see somebody to show them he was interested enough to show up. The amount of legislative appearances that he crammed into the few months that he was Secretary of Labor, the twenty months he was Secretary of Labor, probably set an all-time record that it will be hard to surpass. He would be on the Hill so often that it was amazing that he could prepare for these appearances. Now in that connection, perhaps you'd like to have some background in the way various secretaries prepared for legislative appearances.

MOSS: Surely.

CASS: With respect to Secretaries Schwellenbach, Tobin, Durkin, and Mitchell, there

was a general pattern of team briefings by the experts in the Department of Labor. It was less the pattern of team briefings with Secretary Schwollenbach than with his successors. He tended to deal with smaller groups and on a more individual basis. He'd call an individual to his office and talk things over or have a small group with whom he would discuss it. He did have, however, staff groups of the department who on a team basis would prepare the materials. This group was frequently chaired by a special assistant to the Secretary. Secretary Tobin tended less to have written materials prepared for him to read privately and more to have the briefing on an oral basis by a fairly substantial team. There would be a half dozen or eight people there at a time, as opposed to one or two. Secretary Durkin was somewhat between these two in terms of size and frequency of briefings but still used a briefing technique. Secretary Mitchell used both techniques simultaneously. He would read rather voluminous briefing materials on a private basis, but he also would have team briefings on a group basis.

Secretary Goldberg, on the other hand, was somewhat different in the way he approached the briefing. He would have a very small group come in and brief him on a very limited basis. They would give him the materials, briefly tell him what the materials were about, and then answer questions that he would bring up to them, very briefly, and then he would go off and he would leave them and read the materials and the next morning would be fully prepared for a presentation on the Hill in great depth and with a mastery of meticulous detail that was amazing. Some of his predecessors, like Secretary Mitchell, for example, were also masters of detail and nuances of meaning with respect to legislative matters. But Secretary Mitchell tended to prepare for a legislative appearance over a longer period of time than Secretary Goldberg did. The very limited period that Secretary Goldberg devoted to preparation for

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an appearance before a congressional committee on a piece of legislation on general matters was what was so impressive. The large number of appearances he made was also very impressive. Each of these people operated in his own way and differently and each, of course, had his own successes.

I think in summarizing the different approaches, it would not be unfair to generalize by saying that Secretary Mitchell was more interested in administrative matters, the organization and the format of the departmental activities, than Secretary Goldberg. To that end, as his second under secretary, he brought in a consummate expert in administration. Under Secretary O'Connell was a tremendously impressive administrator. Secretary Goldberg, on the other hand, tended not to be as concerned with administrative structure as with program and people. This does not mean that Secretary Mitchell was not concerning himself also with program and people, but he did it within a framework that was more organizationally administrative as opposed to just the individual personal attentions and dealing of Secretary Goldberg.

MOSS: How did Secretary Goldberg then make up for the gap in administrative attention?

CASS: Well, I think it's fair to say he just relied upon individuals to do things. He would, for example, call upon me and say he'd like to have me take on straightening out a particular matter for him. But he wasn't concerned about where that fell in the administrative hierarchy and he just relied upon me to see to it that the right people were contacted so that no one got his feelings hurt because it was really his responsibility and the Secretary picked it up and asked me to do it when it wasn't my responsibility. Secretary Mitchell, on the other hand, would have sent a more formal approach to it, down to the right individual and since he gave me a number of assignments, I might be the right individual or I might not. He would put it in the correct administrative hands and be concerned that it was in the correct administrative hands. Secretary Goldberg, on the other hand, was people and program oriented and his approach would be, there are people in the Department of Labor who have a problem. He'd call me or some one else and say, "Take care of their problem and just tell me you did it." Or he would say, "There's a particular substantive program that's necessary to help the people in Asia. Let's develop it." He wouldn't be concerned that it might fall nicely into one particular assistant secretary's bailiwick. If he happened to be dealing with somebody else at the time and thought that somebody else could do it, he'd tell him to do it because he wanted to get it done.

There's another interesting difference in the approaches of these two, and that is, Secretary Mitchell had tremendous interest in human beings and was concerned about the individual employees of the department as he was about the individual working person. But he would tend to deal with their problems through the organizational lines. Secretary Goldberg, on the other hand, would tend to be available to

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anybody on earth with respect to his problem. For example, if it was a matter of dealing with a letter he received from an individual employee, Secretary Mitchell would send that letter to the officer of the department who had responsibility in that area and ask him to take care of it in order to remedy whatever the problem was that was causing difficulties for the employee. Secretary Goldberg, on the other hand—on at least three occasions I can think of and I could probably think of many more if I did put my mind to it—would call me about a matter, something in which I had no responsibilities, and say, "I have a letter," or "a complaint," or "I have noticed this, with respect to a problem of employees. Take a look at it with me and we'll decide what should be done," or just "Do it."

Let me give you three illustrations which may help to indicate how this operated. Secretary Goldberg got an anonymous letter once from employees in the Department of Labor saying, "Mr. Secretary, the heat in our office is so great"—this being the summertime—"that we just can't work. The sun comes in on our side of the building at noon and, in addition, the air conditioning isn't working." I got a call from the Secretary at one point and he said, "Come to my office," and he showed me the letter and he said, "Let's go take a look at this." Well, we walked down to the elevator and took the elevator to the floor of the department on which this was taking place and startled all the employees by walking in. He said, "I'm Secretary Goldberg, I just wanted to see how your living conditions are here." We went around from office to office, shaking hands with people and seeing how their living conditions were. When we had been to a half dozen offices, we walked out into the

hall and the Secretary turned to me and said, "I think that's awful, don't you?" And I said, "Yes sir, I think the complaint is well-founded. The conditions are just terrible. I don't see how they work in there." He said, "Have it corrected immediately."

On another occasion he said to me that he had noted that the place where the chauffeurs were housed when they were not driving was not comfortable, was not air-conditioned, was not proper. I suspect that one of the chauffeurs called that to his attention while driving him somewhere one day, but he told me to see that it was taken care of.

A third situation was involved with the reproduction units of the department where employees duplicate, assemble, collate, staple materials. The Secretary had either heard of some situation which he felt needed investigation or just was curious as to how the employees in the Department of Labor who did purely manual work as opposed to desk jobs were operating. In any event, he asked me to go through this part of the basement with him and he decided that the noise level too great, the lighting was totally inadequate and the heat made the working conditions very uncomfortable. All three of these situations were to be corrected in order to make the working conditions of employees in the Department of Labor, something of which the department

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need not be ashamed. He did not feel it was appropriate for the Department of Labor to be demanding of private industry under statutes passed by the Congress that they have safe and healthful working conditions when we did not have what he considered healthful working conditions.

MOSS: He didn't want any sweat shops in the Labor Department.

CASS: No, he didn't. Other situations in the Department of Labor, of course, demanded his attention. He instituted the open house for employees at Christmastime to come in with their families and meet the Secretary of Labor and the under secretary and the assistant secretaries and be wished a happy holiday season. He put some refreshments around there for them. It was a personal relationship with his staff which he appreciated and they appreciated.

MOSS: You've raised one or two interesting things here that I'd like you to comment on in a general way. In a way, some of what you've outlined has, to my thinking at any rate, more or less violated the schoolbook rules on administration: this business of extending line authority to the political assistant secretaries seems to be asking for trouble from the bureau chiefs who are used to exercising their own line authority without any intermediary; and the second thing, this business of simply going to the problem no matter who does it. It seems to be the kind of thing that, at least according to the textbook outline, is begging for trouble and confusion. What is your feeling on the way that this actually worked out in practice?

CASS: Well, the extension of line authority to the assistant secretaries which was done and started under Secretary Mitchell and continued under Secretary

Goldberg, I personally think was a very sound decision. My own concept of government is personal, of course; I don't ask anyone else to accept it. But I feel if you believe in democracy, you believe in the right of the people to get what they vote for. The people elect a president and a vice president. That's it. The president appoints the cabinet officer, and with the advice and consent of the Senate the cabinet officer and the other top officials of the department take their positions.

Any new administration, in my personal judgment, is entitled to have the policies, the operations, the administration of the whole department responsive to the political orientation which they have and which the president has. Now a good civil servant recognizes that and with absolute loyalty tries to accommodate himself to the new directions, the new policies, the new procedures of any administration. There are, however, persons who I think violate their oaths to office and their civil service responsibilities by operating under the concept of "outlive 'em or outlast 'em." Those people should be removed. Too often they're exactly the people who are not removed.

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It is just too hard in a big government for an under secretary, for example, to know whether all the bureau chiefs are responding to the spirit as well as the letter of the new policies of the new administration. Therefore, it is helpful in my judgment to subdivide that responsibility by having political officials watching smaller areas to see that policy is made in a way that the new administration wishes it made and that policy is implemented in the way that the new administration wishes to have it implemented. For it is certainly true that you can set policy at the top level and find you haven't changed a thing if the administration of it is not loyal to the top command.

Every official of government at any responsible level makes policy. He makes policy even if all he is doing is administering policy, because the application of policy to a particular fact situation is in and of itself a policy decision. Just to decide whether the facts of this case fall within that policy directive is a decision which can implement or subvert the policy itself. So I think it is particularly appropriate that the day-to-day supervision of career officials be by policy officials and that it be on a wide enough basis so that it can be meaningful. Now there was some decrease in authority of the bureau directors. There was some resentment when this was first done by Secretary Durkin just to a small extent, by Secretary Mitchell to a greater extent, and continued under Secretary Goldberg. But I'm not the slightest bit concerned about the discontent of persons who lose part of their authority to individuals appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, because they're the people who are brought in really to run the government.

Now as far as the administrative line business is concerned, that can cause problems and it did cause a little resentment. I'd be frank to say that there were officials whose noses were out of joint, as we say, because they felt that the Secretary had dealt with somebody else in an area that was a responsibility of theirs. I don't feel, however, that that did any real harm and let me tell you why. If you have a secretary who's busy, he's doing a great many things, why ask him to remember in whose bailiwick this falls? Why ask him to be concerned with administrative nuances and niceties of format and line? Why not just make it possible for him to turn to whoever happens to be there and say, "Get this done," and then rely upon

the individual who gets the assignment to take the time and trouble to find out in whose area of responsibility this should fall, to bring that person into the process and to implement it through the appropriate administrative line or chain of command or whatever you wish to say. I don't think that's asking too much. And you have to remember that unlike any secretary under whom I have served—this may not be true of Miss Perkins, but certainly it was true of Secretaries Schwellenbach, and Tobin, and Durkin, and Mitchell—Secretary Goldberg was used far more by the

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President in areas that didn't fall within the strict purview of the Department of Labor's responsibility than any secretaries before that time. In essence, Secretary Goldberg was doing with respect to his staff what President Kennedy was doing with respect to him: he was using a man who was competent and who was available to do a job for him without worrying about jurisdictional lines and bureaucratic feelings and the rest of these things. Secretary Goldberg did this. A few people got their feelings hurt, but most people understood he was operating efficiently and they didn't worry about this.

Now it's always nice and comfortable to know that a secretary is running the department along strict lines and everybody knows in which block he falls and who does it and so forth. The era in which this was done best, of course, was Secretary Mitchell's administration. But it doesn't mean that you can't achieve great efficiency doing it a different way if you have the cooperation of your staff. I am one who has always remembered Alexander Pope's statement two centuries ago, "For forms of government let fools contest. Whate'er is best administer'd is best." I would say regarding the organization and structure of the Department of Labor, and I've seen it in varied forms over many years, I don't think that any one structure is necessarily better than any other structure. It depends upon who is administering it. After all, all policies are implemented by people, and all programs are administered by people, and if you have people who make it work, it is good. I've seen structural monstrosities work because individuals put their minds to trying to make them work, to cooperating with each other, and I've seen very logical, very textbook types of organizations that were inefficient operations because the individuals were inefficient.

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2]

MOSS: Let me ask you one more question.

CASS: I may be talking too much, I don't know.

MOSS: No, this is splendid.

CASS: As a matter of fact, I'm going to use a copy of this someday and maybe I ought to write up something from this. I guess it wouldn't make any problems from your standpoint.

MOSS: Nope, not at all.

CASS: I'm really trying to lay it out for you in a perspective which is broad enough. Now I want to come to a few little things, I want to give you a couple of things about the Secretary's dealing with the President. And there's another

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thing, I made myself a note when I repeated myself once that I think will give you some insight about how Goldberg operated as I think is coming through.

MOSS: Yes, it is.

CASS: I liked the other people, but I think Mitchell and Goldberg were in a class by themselves. The two of them could run the country, and I don't know which I'd have as president and which as vice president but the two of them could run the country. They were men of such ability and a totally different approach. I'm trying to show, really, totally different approaches can be equally effective, because in the hands of masters, and these were masters, they worked.

MOSS: Let me follow up, on one thing, on this business of the position of the bureau chief. I'm fascinated because more in other departments, I think, particularly in an area like Department of Interior where you have a constituency, a more identifiable constituency for bureaus, you get a kind of political independence on the part of the bureau chief where he has his allies in Congress and in his constituencies.

CASS: I'll be glad to answer that.

MOSS: Does it give him something to fight back with? Yes, go ahead, it's on.

CASS: It's on?

MOSS: Yes.

CASS: I didn't know it was on. I'll be glad to answer that because I think in the Department of Labor, to an extent you don't realize, we had our constituencies too—with the allies in the public sector and in the Congress. For example, we have a Veterans Employment Service and we had a Bureau of Veterans Reemployment Rights. We have an employment security operation with the state employment security agencies and we had a Bureau of Labor Standards that dealt directly with the commissioners of labor of the various states. We have the Women's Bureau dealing with the women's groups. So to an extent that doesn't appear really because we're a homogeneous department and a small one, we had constituencies too.

What we had found was that the bureau directors did build up their little empires and their relationships which could not be touched or tampered with. Some secretaries tried to

deal with this problem unsuccessfully. But in the hands of other secretaries, you could accomplish your objectives and overcome bureau resistance. First

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the men themselves were too big and too strong for any bureau director to challenge them. The relations of a Jim Mitchell with President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] or an Arthur Goldberg with President Kennedy were not to be defeated by an combination of bureau directors and their constituencies.

MOSS: This is very interesting.

CASS: The bureau directors knew that there was only so much they could do to buck the boss, undercut the boss, or build themselves up at his expense, because they knew that when the chips were down these people were men whose public image was so great that they could not be stopped. And it doesn't take a bureau director, even a bureaucratic bureau director, long to recognize a few obvious developments.

I have always maintained that the Department of Labor is only as strong as its secretary. All the rest of us are expendable. We serve him. If we serve him well, he is successful and we are in good shape. If we serve him poorly and he is not successful, it is he who suffers but not he alone. The Department of Labor suffers, the program suffers, and the people of the nation we're supposed to be helping suffer. An inefficient Department of Labor cannot serve the people of the nation effectively. It's like Samson in the temple. What have you accomplished if you tear down a secretary of labor and destroy a program that's for the benefit of millions of people in order to maintain your own little bureaucratic empire?

In the long run, a bureau director tends to say to himself, "My program is best served by an effective boss." Now, true, not all of them are loyal to any particular administration, but most of them were. They saw, for example, periods in which the Department of Labor lost programs by transfer to other government agencies, lost budgets by very deep cuts in our appropriations, lost personnel by reductions in force as a result of budget cuts. I have seen the Department of Labor lose bureaus. I have seen reductions in force in my limited period in the Department of Labor where people with twenty-five years government service but no veteran's preference were laid off because the cuts were that deep. Now, is that success?

I have, on the other hand, seen periods in which the President and the Congress gave the department new programs, new laws to administer, increased appropriations, more people. That's the opportunity to serve. And in my experience, I have found that a secretary who is respected by the President and the Congress, can get new programs into the Department of Labor, and expand existing programs, can increase efficiency and can provide better service to the people of the nation. He can do this sometimes because he's that good, but he can always do it better, if they are, in baseball terms, talking it up in the outfield. If the team is behind him, if he has the loyal support, the enthusiastic support, not just

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grudging assistance, but real through-the-staff-lines support and enthusiasm and excitement and loyalty of his staff. This is why, I think, bureau directors who might have normally resisted the decrease in their own power and the increase in the power of political officials, after grudging and sometimes unhappy recognition of the facts of life, tended to come into line.

I think the political officials of the department are more hurt by inefficiency on the part of staff than they are by disloyalty, because the disloyalty tends sooner or later to destroy the disloyal, both because other people tend to see where the power is and because people tend to say to themselves, "If he's disloyal to his present boss, will he be disloyal to his next boss, and is it politically safe for me to put my trust in a man who's disloyal to his boss?" Most people tend sooner or later to adopt that appraisal of people. So I think disloyalty is self-defeating. Inefficiency, however, can be stagnating to an organization. A man is not quite bad enough to fire or he's been promoted over a period of years so his file won't let you fire him. You know, he's been promoted by and received enthusiastic recognition and acclaim by successive supervisors including secretaries of labor and now you say he's inefficient. You may be right, but it's hard to prove it.

MOSS: What do you think of this "Peter Principle" they call it? People are promoted to their basic level of incompetence. Isn't there a tendency for people to get promoted to it?

CASS: I've seen some of that. I don't think that's the real problem in government. My assessment of the real problem in government is primarily promotion of people to jobs for which they are not best equipped. For example, you take a person who is an expert as a lawyer or as an economist or as a statistician and you put him into a high administrative position. He isn't less expert as an economist or as a lawyer or as a statistician, but administration may not be his forte. You've done him and the organization a great disservice but you can't say he's incompetent. He's just misplaced. And the problem in government too often has been that you can't recognize a person's ability adequately in terms of his need for monetary rewards without promoting him into a high administrative position when as a special assistant or expert in a narrower area, he serves the government far better and he isn't supervising people. He may be a terrible supervisor but he may be a very expert person in a narrower area. And we just hurt the government dreadfully by not rewarding adequately without putting a person in charge of a large program or supervising many people and this kind of thing.

 There are a couple of other things I think I should talk about.

MOSS: Yes, why don't you go ahead and talk from your notes there.

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CASS: And also, perhaps after this you'll want to make a list of some things we should come back to. The whole setting up of the President's advisory committee on labor-management policy—you have my papers, I think, on that. I think what you ought to know is that that was something that Secretary Goldberg

himself decided. It was his idea; it didn't come up from the staff. In fact, I have to admit I've been embarrassed over many years with many secretaries. When something really wonderful came out and it was their idea, I've said to myself, "Now why didn't I think of that and serve him or one of his predecessors better by thinking of it." This is one of those cases. It was a great idea and it was his, and he talked to the president about it and the President said he thought it ought to be alternately chaired by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Commerce [Luther H. Hodges], and Secretary Goldberg agreed to this. He determined what he thought the committee should do and I drafted the executive order and the President's statement myself, and these were issued.

Then Secretary Goldberg chaired the committee, and out of that period when he chaired it came two great policy statements—one on collective bargaining and one on automation—of which you have copies, which were unanimously adopted by a broad spectrum of national leaders from various walks of life—labor, management and the public—and which were really landmark breakthroughs in terms of getting that kind of agreement from that kind of group on matters as controversial and as important as these. I can't add more to the story than merely to emphasize for the benefit of any future historian, that this should not be credited to people like me who happen to draft the papers at the request of the boss. The idea should be completely labeled as his.

MOSS: One of the things that he asked that committee to do, of course, was to consider the national emergency strike provisions of the Taft-Hartley act with a view to possible revision. As I understand it, they simply could not get the same kind of unanimous agreement of this, the issue cut too cleanly across labor-management lines for them to really come to a meeting of the minds of this. Is that so?

CASS: That is correct, but I think what they did accomplish in the broad collective bargaining paper is helpful in dealing with the national emergency picture even though it didn't deal with details of legislation. In other words, they couldn't agree upon details of amendment of legislation but they could agree upon some very basic principles which they incorporated in the collective bargaining paper.

MOSS: Fine. Do you have another note there that you want to speak to?

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CASS: Yes, I wanted only to mention one more thing where the papers will be made available. I'm going to give you as we discussed for microfilming the complete file on the issue of foreign flags or flags of convenience as they're called. That committee was one which met for a considerable period of time. It was chaired by Secretary Goldberg. I did the staff work and chaired a technical committee which backstopped the policy officials and did a tremendous amount of research. The papers will speak for themselves but there again this was a major problem which cut across a number of departments and agencies and was one where the President called upon the Secretary of Labor, Secretary Goldberg, to look at the whole matter and bring into the consultation all elements of the entire administration and develop a policy which was done.

There are a couple of things which I should mention which throw light upon the way that Secretary Goldberg operated that would be of some interest to anyone studying this period in a future time. He once went out to make a speech in Cleveland, Ohio, as I recall, and as he was driving in from the airport, some people who had met him talked about this strike that was going on then in the building trades, stopping construction and so forth. Somebody apparently said, "Look, why don't you settle that while you're here?" Well, he took this as a challenge and did. I think the records will show that the format for the settlement was worked out while he was in town. Of course, his getting the music on again at the Metropolitan is part of another time and story but also throws a little light on the type of person that he was.

I'd like to address myself to little-known aspects of his work here in the department which will show the kind of person he was and the relationship he had with the President and with the staff. When he took office, there was a threat of a strike that would stop the harvesting of lettuce that was already ready for harvesting. The question turned on whether he should have foreign labor made available for harvesting of lettuce at a time when there was a dispute between the agricultural labor people and the lettuce growers. It did not have to do with providing strike-breakers but it had to do with whether people who had this kind of problem should be given the Mexican labor that they required.

I remember that Secretary Goldberg did provide labor for them. His feeling was that it was not right or proper that agricultural products should rot with people unemployed in the nation and with the investment which a farmer had put into it. Nevertheless, of course, he recognized the rights of working people and so he worked out a format under which this crop would be harvested so it wouldn't be lost, but he would bring the parties together so that they would work out the problems they had. The labor people would lose the golden opportunity of stopping the harvesting of a crop, but the management people would nevertheless have to deal fairly with their workers.

This had to do at that time with the wages that were being paid and whether the wages that were paid would attract domestic workers. If the wages that were paid were high enough to attract domestic workers,

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you wouldn't need braceros from Mexico and would not be entitled to them. If, however, they were not high enough to attract domestic workers, was it fair to bring in braceros? Well, he straightened out the whole rate problem later but at least he got the lettuce harvested at this point which, I think, showed a facet of his own character that somebody at some future time would want to know about.

Another one that I think is important, and it deals with the same farm labor area, involves a question of setting rates, these adverse effect rates. Secretary Goldberg asked the staff if any hearings had been held before they had recommended adverse effect rates to him that he should set. They said, "No," and he asked why, and they said because they're not required under the administrative procedure act. He said, "Do you mean to tell me that you're asking me to set rates which must be paid by employers and which must be offered to American workers before foreign workers can be brought in and you haven't had hearings at which the parties at interest could come in and say what they thought of this?" And again

they said it hadn't been required and it had never been done. So he gave them a little lecture in terms of fairness and decency and proper attitudes towards people. He emphasized that he wasn't nearly as concerned with whether people had a legal right to a hearing as whether they had a moral right to a hearing. And he said as long as he was Secretary of Labor, that any person would have a right to be heard even if the law did not require it; that it was a secretary's decision, not a congressional thing. As a result of which he set up hearings at four different places around the United States at which both labor and management had an opportunity to come in and say whether the rates set were high enough for working people or too high for farmers. And for the first time in history they got an actual formal type of opportunity to state their case, as opposed to anything they might have written in or called in or told anybody off the record. It was a little shock to the staff but it showed that insight that he had in terms of the fact that any human being has the right to state his case.

The loyalty which Secretary Goldberg had from his own staff was demonstrated by one incident which I can mention. I once went to Under Secretary Wirtz and said, "That was a great speech you made. It really ought to be widely publicized." He looked at me and said, "Thanks very much for the compliment but we're publicizing the Secretary of Labor not the Under Secretary." They had a very good working relationship which, I think, that one little story says better than a long dissertation could. Of course, the sequel to it and a very happy one is that when the President nominated Secretary Goldberg for the position of associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Secretary Goldberg recommended Under Secretary Wirtz as his successor and helped in getting the approval of the trade union movement for this. So loyalty is its own reward.

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