

Kenneth M. Birkhead, Oral History Interview, JFK#2 – 7/27/1967
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Biographical Note

Birkhead was finance director for the Democratic National Committee from 1958-1959 and assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Liaison from 1961-1966. In this interview, he discusses his work on Lyndon Baines Johnson's speech-writing team during his vice-presidential campaign in 1960, his duties as Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Liaison, and 1961 feed grains legislation, among other issues.

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Kenneth M. Birkhead—JFK #2

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Second of Three Oral History Interviews

with

Kenneth M. Birkhead

July 27, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By Larry Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: All right, Mr. Birkhead, in your first interview, you had spoken of your efforts in the early fifties, or doing some research on Senator McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] that then-Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] was interested in. Would you go into that in a little more depth as to exactly what you were doing and what he was interested in?

BIRKHEAD: I'm not positive how I got into the McCarthy thing. I was working in 1950 in the Hennings [Thomas Carey Hennings, Jr.] campaign in Missouri. After I had finished working on my master's degree at the University of Missouri, I came back here to Washington and went to work for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

It was at this time when I first began to, really, I guess you'd say take more than a passing personal interest in McCarthy. I had known him slightly, and he had appeared in Missouri, of course, in the Hennings campaign and had pretty viciously attacked Hennings. This brought on my interest, more than passing personal interest, in the guy. In the course of this, I began to collect some material; in the course of collecting material, began to run on other people who were collecting material. And as very often happens when you're running around looking for information, you find other people looking for the same information, and you begin to exchange information. And I began to collect

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a file on him. There was some interest in him over in the Senate side. And it was at that time that I began to get involved in providing some information to some of the senators and digging up further information at their request. And because of the political nature of McCarthy, his attacks on the Democrats, I was working for the Democrats, they began to use this for political purposes, in some instances.

So this sort of evolved; it wasn't really a specific assignment that I had. It began to become an assignment after people found out I'd collected some information, and they used it and wanted more.

HACKMAN: You had commented that Senator Kennedy seemed probably more interested than any other senator.

BIRKHEAD: At that time, he was. Of course, he was in the House at that time, and I was working in the House and had worked with him some and had gotten to know him—I'd known him earlier but got to know him better. He would often ask me about specific things about McCarthy, or generally, or if I'd see him, he'd ask, "What have you discovered about our friend from Wisconsin recently?" I don't ever remember preparing any papers or memorandums for him although I used to give him information from time to time of something that I had. Much of it was verbal, in a sense.

HACKMAN: Do you remember him putting any of that to specific use that you know of?

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BIRKHEAD: I'm not aware of any specific use, and I'm not aware at that time that he was doing anything specific in connection with McCarthy. I think as just, as I knew him, sort of normal with Jack Kennedy, he was always looking for information. He was a great collector of things which he filed away in his mind for later use or for his use in making judgments on different things. I have no remembrance of any specific use he ever made of anything.

HACKMAN: You weren't at all in contact with him later when he was in the Senate when the censure vote came up at that point?

BIRKHEAD: I don't specifically remember, no. I was in contact with many of the senators. Of course, he was gone much of that time because of his operations. But don't specifically remember, although occasionally Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] or Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] or somebody would ask me something or I'd give them some information. But I don't remember specifically having been in contact with him, no.

HACKMAN: Moving on to something else you'd said in that first interview. You

had commented that Senator Kennedy was a little puzzled on your decision to go to work for the American Veterans Committee. Did he ever comment on his opinion of that group?

BIRKHEAD: Well, although a lot of people that he knew well, like Frank Roosevelt, Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.], and Chuck Bolte [Charles G. Bolte], who was the original, the first chairman of the American Veterans Committee, and others such as this, Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] of Michigan and Orville Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] of Minnesota had been very active in the American Veterans Committee—and these were people that Kennedy knew and had some contact with after the war—had been very active in the American Veterans Committee, Kennedy had never joined. He'd been asked many times to join. He had never had a very.... He had never thought that the American Veterans Committee was necessary. He thought it was sort of a waste of effort of a lot of

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people. Then, of course, we had our early struggles to try to remove Communists from the organization. He hadn't wanted to get involved in that fight which a lot of people had spent a lot of time with.

When I left the Senate in '55-56, he wondered why I'd done that. He said that he thought that I should have stayed in politics or concerned myself with something else. But this was, as much as anything, I think, because he had never really had much of a feeling in favor of the American veterans Committee, as I think sometimes he had not had in connection with ADA [Americans for Democratic Action]. He was not philosophically really opposed to what they were doing. He just didn't think they were necessary.

HACKMAN: Were there any efforts made after you went with them, became the director, to get him to join?

BIRKHEAD: No.

HACKMAN: Nobody was making an effort at that point?

BIRKHEAD: No. The American Veterans Committee at that point, strange as it may seem about an organization, was really not out looking for a big membership drive. We had enough members to keep the organization going. We had certain things we wanted to do, and we pretty much concentrated on those. Our renewal membership was practically a hundred percent a year, and we really didn't go out looking for members.

HACKMAN: From your own position at that time in connection with the veterans committee and maybe contacts with some of these people in ADA, do you recall any of their attitudes toward Senator Kennedy at that time as far as his liberalism?

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BIRKHEAD: Well, I think it's safe to say that some of them were.... Yes, you used to hear people say, "Well, I'm not sure about him. He's never had good feelings about ADA. He's never had good feelings about the American Veterans Committee. He didn't stand up firmly against Joe McCarthy." And they'd add up a lot of these things and come up with a feeling that maybe Jack Kennedy really wasn't a liberal.

Now, these were the use of these symbols, and because he didn't associate himself with the symbols, then they questioned whether he was real or not. This was not true of all of them. Gee well, Gil Harrison [Gilbert A. Harrison], who's I guess now still, I know he's still publisher of the *New Republic*, was very active in the American Veterans Committee, was one of the earliest supporters of Kennedy for President. So it wasn't true through all of them. But there were an amazing number of them that really didn't feel that Kennedy was real in his liberalism because he didn't associate himself the way they thought he should with some of these symbols.

HACKMAN: During the period, then, when you worked as the finance director for the Democratic National Committee, did Senator Kennedy ever express to you any of his views on campaign financing or changes he felt were necessary in this area? Do you remember ever discussing that with him?

BIRKHEAD: Oh, probably during the course of that time I discussed it with him. I don't remember specifically. Frankly, I had so many discussions with him during that time, but it was more on an immediate problem of meeting the National Committee's payroll every week. We were a greatly reduced National Committee, but we still had eight or nine thousand dollars a week of payroll and some expenses to meet. I was struggling to try to find this money. Many times I'd talk to him, or through him, or at his suggestion, people in Massachusetts might be helpful. And they were. There were some of the payrolls that we made just because Mr. Kennedy was willing to put his shoulder to the wheel a little bit. I don't mean that—I don't think any were over his personal, directly his personal contributions,

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some of them may have been. But he was helpful in making it possible for us to have enough money to carry on. And most of our discussions were more about the immediate problem of raising money rather than the philosophic discussion about how campaigns ought to be financed.

HACKMAN: You mentioned also while you were working for the Democratic National Committee, looking ahead to 1960 now, you made the comment that Senator Kennedy and his people had never attempted to compromise you or try to get any information out of you in that position. What type of

problems came up like this in relation to any of the other candidates or would you want to comment?

BIRKHEAD: Well, don't want to get specific about any candidates. But during the time I had been there, we had developed the lists on contributors around the country. Supporters around the country had pretty badly gone to pot after the '56 election. And we rebuilt these. We put a heck of a lot of names on plates of people who were willing to contribute. We made some mailings around the country from lists that we had, old lists, lists that we found. We even bought some lists from list companies and tried them out to see what kind of reaction we'd get from them. Some of them we'd get very good reaction to; some we didn't get so good reaction to. But we were beginning to build up a pretty good list of names of Democrats around the country. People who had more than just said they were Democrats, they'd made contributions; some of them small, some of them larger, some of them quite large.

I had some of the representatives of candidates trying to get their hands on some of the lists, trying to find out where people were and who people were, this kind of thing, asking sometimes things that I thought were really not properly information that they should have. This wasn't information that they should have. This was information that belonged to the National Committee, and until they were the nominee of the party, this information should belong to the National Committee. Kennedy people, I've no remembrance of ever any questions like this raised. I don't mean that this was an everyday occurrence. But there were a few times when they tried to put a little pressure on to get a hold of lists that really if we'd

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given it to them, they might have had some advantage over some other candidate.

HACKMAN: You mentioned that you were a member of a consultant group to the Democratic National Committee then in 1960 which was planning for the campaign. Were any of the recommendations that this group made, did they become policy at all during the campaign?

BIRKHEAD: Gosh, I'd hate to have to be pinned down to specifics. We did provide some advice. We had considerable discussions on use of televisions and the kind of television uses that should be made.... Gee, I'd have to do some thinking to really remember. I just right offhand can't recall. No. And I can't honestly say that I remember any specific recommendations that we made that were used in the campaign. In general terms, they were, we generally were.... I know we had many discussions about the use of television time, the amount of television time. And the emphasis was always on let's do short programs; let's don't burden television viewers with long, tortuous programs. We discussed how you hooked on to the most popular programs at the end to get the benefit of the audience that was tuned in to the program, things like this. In general terms, I don't remember specific ones, no.

HACKMAN: Who were some of the other people involved in this at that time?

BIRKHEAD: Well, Charley Murphy [Charles S. Murphy] sat in on these meetings, he's now the administrator of CAB [Civil Aeronautics Board]; Dave Lloyd [David Demarest Lloyd] who was head of the Truman [Harry S. Truman] Library who's now dead; Ted Sorensen came to some of the meetings; India Edwards came, I believe, to some of the meetings. We had representatives of the principal candidates or those that were considered to be the principal candidates. Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler], the chairman of the National Committee, of course, presided. Charley Tyroler, who was the head of the Democratic Advisory Committee. You know, I really haven't thought about that group for a long time, and I'd sort of have to reconstruct it in my mind.

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HACKMAN: Do you remember anything specifically that Sorensen as a representative of Kennedy was interested in?

BIRKHEAD: No. I have a remembrance that at one time we sounded like we were getting awfully firm about the amount of television time we were going to contract for and who we were going to contract for it with, et cetera. And I have a remembrance of one meeting when Ted felt quite strongly that we shouldn't get ourselves so tied down to commitments that the candidate, whoever he might be, would be stuck with some commitments that maybe he, for whatever reason, would decide shouldn't be. Most of the time I don't remember that Ted said too much at the meetings. But I have in my mind one time when he put his foot down pretty hard on this.

HACKMAN: Do you remember if this group considered at all the amount of the debt that might be run up in the campaign, or what would be allowable?

BIRKHEAD: No, there was general consideration that there was a debt going to be run up in the campaign. We had started, when I was finance director, the so-called 750 Club where we were trying to get 750 Democrats to give a thousand dollars each to pay off the then-existing debt. And it was beginning to appear at this time, which was not too long before the Convention, that we were going to make it. So that at least the Committee would go into the campaign without a big debt to pay off before they started. I don't remember any real discussions of the amounts of money that ought to be expended in the campaign, no.

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HACKMAN: All right, then, moving on to the '60 campaign when you were working with the speech writing group with Charley Murphy. Could you describe how that group worked?

BIRKHEAD: Well, this was a speech writing group basically working for the Vice President, not for the President. It was patterned a little along the lines of the speech writing group we set up for President Truman in 1948, with a contact in the Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] organization a good part of the time was Bill Moyers [William D. Moyers], and a rundown as far ahead as they could give it of his schedule. And then we tried to divide his schedule up among the several of us that were working on it to provide background material and speech material, speech ideas, and sometimes fairly completed speeches, for the Vice President to use, or now President Johnson to use, in the campaign.

We would try to find local background of particular places he was going to be, even went back to using the WPA [Works Progress Administration] guides which we used so extensively in the '48 campaign to get local color. We contacted members of Congress and local politicians in the areas in which he was going to try to find out what they thought the key issues were, what he ought to stress in any comments he made in the area, who he ought to be sure to mention, and if there were any real controversial possibilities that he ought to avoid mentioning, and then to put this together in a draft form to push on through to his staff that was traveling with him, George Reedy [George E. Reedy, Jr.] and others that were traveling with him, for their use and his use in the campaign.

HACKMAN: Was this group under the Democratic National Committee or was it strictly....

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BIRKHEAD: No, it was under the National Committee. We were located over in the Investment Building on 15th and K where the National Committee had a lot of its offices, and we had one suite of rooms off at the side. But the basic funds for it came out of the National Committee. I wasn't paid by the National Committee; I was sort of on leave from my job.

HACKMAN: Was there any coordination between this group and the overall Kennedy headquarters?

BIRKHEAD: There was a degree of coordination. Charley Murphy and Clark Clifford [Clark M. Clifford] and others that had some efforts in connection with this little team would be in touch with the Kennedy people and with Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] and others, the former Solicitor General who did a lot of the Kennedy writing....

HACKMAN: Cox?

BIRKHEAD: Yeah, yeah.

HACKMAN: Archibald Cox.

BIRKHEAD: Archibald Cox and others who were working on Kennedy speech material. Of course, we tried.... We kept and kept up with a complete running file of everything the President was saying and how he was playing various issues so that whatever we put down on paper was following the pattern and stress and emphasis he was giving to various issues.

HACKMAN: Was there ever any direction from that office as far as what Senator Johnson should try to emphasize? The religious issue or....

BIRKHEAD: Not that I'm aware of. No, I'm not aware of any such things. No.

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HACKMAN: Do you recall any problems coming up in the relationship as far as objections to what Senator Johnson was campaigning?

BIRKHEAD: Oh, there was occasional—I think it was more newspaper talk than it was in actual fact. Sometimes they'd complain about his emphasis on civil rights versus the President's emphasis on civil rights. This was particularly true when Johnson made his trip through the South. But it was never any real—that I was personally aware of, no. I used to read about it in the newspapers, but I was never personally aware of it.

HACKMAN: To what extent did Senator Johnson use the material, or what particular materials did he use? Was there anything special?

BIRKHEAD: Well, it's like all kinds of things like this; there were some things we turned out that he used in great—practically.... We'd see his speech reported back to us either on the ticket, or we'd get a mimeographed copy of what he released, and it was practically what we had put down. And other times we couldn't even recognize it. For various reasons, when he'd gotten in locality, Reedy and the others decided that he needed an entirely different thing than we used. Sometimes there'd be bits and pieces. It varied. I wouldn't want to try to put a percentage on it.

HACKMAN: Were there many problems that came up during that time as far as Senator Johnson's scheduling, as far as switching scheduling? I've heard there were some problems.

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BIRKHEAD: I heard about them. I was not in that office from 9 to 5:30 kind of thing. I was carrying on some other work in connection with my regular work, and so I didn't get involved in a lot of the details. Yes, there were scheduling problems. We used to hear about them. We'd get the schedule for

several days ahead, and we'd begin to put some material together for it. Then all of a sudden it would all be wiped out, and we'd get an entirely different schedule. I must admit I... Time was too short to get into the details of why this happened, but I used to read lots of stories about it and hear lots of rumors about it. There were scheduling problems, but I really didn't get into it that much. There are always more changes and less firmness in the schedule of a vice presidential candidate than there are with a presidential candidate.

HACKMAN: All right, moving on from the campaign, then, after the election, could you discuss how you became connected then with the Department of Agriculture here?

BIRKHEAD: Yeah. Well, after the campaign there was a period when—well, I had really decided to go into education. I don't mean in the government but in education privately. Then Wilbur Cohen [Wilbur J. Cohen], who's now Under Secretary of HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare], talked to me about coming down there as congressional liaison. And I talked to them some about it, but they had some ideas about how congressional liaisons should be run that I just didn't feel I would feel comfortable with. So I said, "No." And at that point Mrs. Lasker [Mary Lasker], who I was working for, decided that, really, now with the Kennedy Administration and the change in the Congress and a lot of other things, there was less need for the kind of work I'd been doing for her. And this was all adding up to my leaving.

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One day I got a call from Charley Murphy, who had been named or nominated as Under Secretary of Agriculture, and he asked me whether I'd be interested in being congressional liaison for the Department of Agriculture, which I'd never thought anything about. So I came down and talked to Murphy, I talked to Freeman, who was an old friend of mine, and over a period of two or three weeks decided to become congressional liaison for the Department of Agriculture. It was not something I applied for. It was not something that I was really seeking. It was really two friends asked me to do it, and I told them if I could do them any good, I'd come down and do it. So I did.

HACKMAN: Going back to the position over at HEW, what were some of the things they wanted to do?

BIRKHEAD: I have a feeling that a congressional liaison guy for a department ought to be a people dealer not an issue dealer, that he deals with the personality of Congress, and that he has the experts in the department which he uses to deal with the issues. And I'm basically not an issue guy. I'm a people dealer, really. This is a word my son dreamed up for me, so I use it. They had a feeling that the congressional liaison person should be much more issue-oriented than I felt he should be. This was not a major disagreement. Wilbur's—gosh, I've known him for thirty years I guess. He's an old friend and a wonderful guy. But they just had this idea about it, and I just didn't feel that—well, first place, not being very issue-oriented in the sense that I

thought they wanted, I didn't think I could do them a very good job actually. I think to a degree they felt that the people dealing would be done by the then-Secretary Ribicoff [Abraham Alexander Ribicoff], who had, of course, been in Congress and would handle that part more. Then the congressional liaison would deal in issues, research, this kind of thing. And this was the reason.

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HACKMAN: After you took the position here then, what specifically was this office to do? Or how was this set up? Were there any general directives on the type thing you were supposed to handle?

BIRKHEAD: No sir. I had a job description of sorts, which I never quite understood, which went on for several pages as assistant to the Secretary, and at the end of the last line "and such other duties as the Secretary may request and/or require." And I think I performed mostly there. But I actually came in with really no directions from Freeman or the Under Secretary or anybody else. They just said, "You're congressional liaison. Go to work and help us get bills passed. And do what you can to see that we get a fair shake in the Congress." Then we began slowly to build up a staff. We sort of built it ourselves, our procedures.

HACKMAN: Could you comment on how your immediate staff came to you?

BIRKHEAD: Well, they came to me in various ways. The immediate—when I started, Duke Norberg [Donald A. Norberg] who had been Democratic State Chairman in Iowa and a newspaper man from there, had resigned, had worked for the Department of Agriculture in years past, and was looking for a spot. And I was looking for two or three people to help out. And Duke was available and looking. I'd known him, and he had good political sense, much more issue oriented than I was. And I needed somebody like this. So we hired Duke. Mabel Snyder, who had worked for the National Farmers Union, who had been on then Senator Humphrey's [Hubert H. Humphrey] staff on the Hill, wanted to get some experience in the executive department. And she was looking around and had good, not only good farm background and understanding agriculture background, but had some Hill experience. So we picked up Mabel. The small staff we built sort of grew this way.

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HACKMAN: Since Mr. Norberg, as you say, was issue oriented, did he spend much time on the Hill?

BIRKHEAD: He spent some time on the Hill, but actually Duke, in the early days, did more of informing me of what the heck it was all about because I did not really know agriculture although when I'd been on the Hill, Senator Clements [Earle C. Clements] that I'd worked for was a member of the

Agriculture Committee [Agriculture and Forestry Committee]. And some by osmosis and some by just sheer being there at the time, I'd picked up some folklore about agriculture. But I really didn't know it very well. And Duke was the guy that kept track of what the legislation was, what it was all about, how it fit in the overall programs, this kind of thing. He spent some time on the Hill. But he spent most of his time here in the Department.

HACKMAN: Would members of Congress work through your office, obtaining specific legislation—not legislation, but information out of the....

BIRKHEAD: Yes. Well, we had a whole variety of services we tried to perform. They sort of grew without us doing much about it as soon as the members of Congress found out we were congressional liaison. In a sense, I always felt congressional liaison ought to first serve the Department in its relationships with Congress. But to a certain degree, congressional liaison, if it was going to have any real meaning on the Hill, ought to some degree to be the members of Congress advocate in the Department. So that they would: they'd contact us on legislative proposals they had; they'd contact us for information; they'd contact us in connection with specific projects they were interested in—a whole variety of things that went on from up there. So that as the office got established, as the word got around, we didn't.... We tried to move quietly and not make some big splash about having set up the office because we knew the moment we did with a new administration and a new Congress that we'd just be inundated with requests and things to handle, and we knew we just couldn't really handle it. So we went fairly quietly about setting it up and then let the word spread slowly so we didn't get buried in seven thousand requests that we couldn't possible handle at once.

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HACKMAN: What about on appointments? Would people on the Hill work through your office in regard to this?

BIRKHEAD: Really, in a sense, congressional liaison, there's not a thing that goes on in the Department that it doesn't get involved in. Yes, we'd get calls about people that they wanted to try to find jobs for, people that they wanted to get appointed to commissions or committees or study groups we had, all kinds of things. They considered that we were, in a sense, their office down here. And, of course, with a new administration and a new Congress with quite a few changes from the previous Congress, an awful lot of them had no idea who even to talk to. Now, a year later, two years later, as the members began to know who handled what in the Department—why, some of the kind of early calls we had, you know, when they'd call and ask, “Does the Forest Service belong to the Department of Agriculture?”—we began to get less and less of those. But in those early days, we were really sort of an information service for them because there were all new people in positions of authority in the Department, and they just didn't know who even to call or what their names were. So we got a tremendous number of calls. I averaged about a hundred a day, I think it was. We were an information service.

HACKMAN: What about your role in connection with farm organizations or other type of organizations? How, in that early period particularly, did you go about establishing contacts with people?

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BIRKHEAD: Well, one of my jobs on my job description among others was not only Congress but to be the Secretary's rep or to carry on a great part of his relationship on the policy level with farm organizations. And through having been around Washington, having served with a senator on the Hill who was on the Agriculture Committee, and having worked in some things in Washington which were not farm but in which farm groups had interest, I knew people in the Farm Bureau [American Farm Bureau Federation], in the Grange [The National Grange], in the National Farmers Union, and some of these organizations. So these were not all strangers. We knew each other some. And just by learning to know them, I began to meet the people in commodity groups and others along the line.

I don't know—the congressional liaison office somehow, I don't know why, sort of becomes in a sense an information office. All kinds of people drop into it not knowing. Very often there's nothing related to Congress. They just look around for some place to call or stop in to find out something in the Department, and they'll go to congressional liaison. So just by some mysterious thing that goes on, a lot of these groups got in touch with us. And of course, a lot of the groups were concerned with legislation and programs. And so they would call us to find out our estimate of what was happening; or if they were for it, how they could help; if they were against it, they didn't ever ask us how they could defeat it, but they were inquiring about what was going on.

HACKMAN: Were there any of these groups that had a particularly close relationship with the Department of Agriculture? Usually in a Democratic administration the National Farmers Union will have entree.

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BIRKHEAD: Yeah. I don't think there's any question but that the Farmers Union had the closest relationship with the new leadership in the Department. The Secretary had been quite close to the Farmers Union which is, if not the biggest, one of the most important farm organizations in Minnesota. The Assistant Secretary, John Baker [John A. Baker], was former legislative director of the Farmers Union. And Mabel Snyder, who worked for me, I guess her immediate preceding job to working for me was with the Farmers Union. And so, yes, of all the farm groups, they probably had the closest relationship.

HACKMAN: Robert Lewis had worked for them.

BIRKHEAD: Bob Lewis, oh, you can go down the line, Ray Fitzgerald. There

were a lot of people in new positions of leadership in the Department who were Farmers Union people or very closely connected with it. They were of all the groups by far the closest to the new leadership.

HACKMAN: How effective, in general, was their work on the Hill? Reuben Johnson I think ran that.

BIRKHEAD: Yeah. Reuben's a very able legislative guy. I have a feeling—and I don't know about in other segments of government and of our economic social structure—I have a feeling in agriculture, I don't think there's a farm group that can pass a bill on the Hill. I think there's some farm groups, the Farm Bureau maybe, the principal one, who can probably build up enough opposition to defeat a bill on the Hill. All farm groups have certain areas where they have strength. The Farmers Union doesn't have any strength in the South. But in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, places like this, they have strength. In those areas, they were very helpful. The Grange, which generally supported Administration programs, has strength in places like Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, very helpful in those areas.

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So they all have their strengths. It's mostly geographical; even though they're considered to be national farm organizations, it's geographical. And in those areas, they could—well, in those areas I'm not sure that we couldn't, if the Administration really got behind it, that we couldn't pass a bill over their opposition, but they could come pretty close in those areas to taking votes away from us. So that they could come close to defeating us. But we passed some bills which they were not really in favor of. And, of course, several times we passed bills which the Farm Bureau vociferously opposed. So it varied by pieces of legislation, and it varied by the area of the country most affected by it.

HACKMAN: You talked before about not getting a great deal of early direction from Secretary Freeman or anybody here as to what you were supposed to be doing. What about the White House? Were there any early meetings with O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien] staff?

BIRKHEAD: Well, yes. O'Brien had started immediately in trying to pull together the legislative structure, or the congressional structure in the departments. But of course, the White House staff itself was so busy getting itself organized that there was quite a period when they really didn't give much direction to the departments. After eight years, a whole brand new group had come in, and most of them, many of them, without any experience really in Washington. So there was a long time just finding where the front door was, how to get in and out of the building. There were no manuals came out and said this is the way your congressional liaison office will be run. And as a consequence, the congressional liaison operations in many of the departments were very dissimilar in the early days, and I think still are pretty dissimilar.

Now this is not true of all departments. State Department, actually there was really very little changes in their structure. Many of the same people stayed on from the transition of administrations. Same true of the Defense Department. Other departments, like ours, they just started over. There was nobody left. I walked into an office down here the first day I went to work, and I was it. There was nobody else even a secretary there. I had to borrow a secretary from the Forest Service to answer the phone until I could get my own secretary.

HACKMAN: As it worked out, then, who at the White House level was particularly involved in working with agricultural legislation? Was there anyone in particular?

BIRKHEAD: Well, Mike Feldman on the staff of the White House was the one most clearly assigned to Agriculture and was most concerned with us. On the legislative side, for strictly a personal reason because he was an old personal friend of mine and happened to buy the house across the street to me when he moved up here, Henry Wilson [Henry Hall Wilson], who had charge of the House side for Larry O'Brien, was my closest contact at the White House. But on general agriculture things in the White House, it was Mike Feldman pretty much. On the congressional side, it was Henry. This was not true with all departments. Many of them were much closer to Larry than I was, although I've known Larry for many years. It was just this fact that Henry and I were old friends, and he bought a house across the street from me. So we saw each other every night and just naturally gravitated in this direction. And, of course, Henry has a background in agriculture, having been close to agriculture in North Carolina.

HACKMAN: Were there any formal procedures through which you reported to the White House or was it usually by phone or what?

BIRKHEAD: We had to give them a weekly report of our major legislative program: what major legislation we had on the Hill, how it was coming, what problems we saw, what particular members were problems. And of course as we got—the White House procedure was that they kept track of all legislation that was moving, major legislation that was moving, but they did not get actively involved in it unless we specifically asked them to, until such time as it got close to House action. And then they would move in. And then when we had a major bill moving through, why, I spent as much time over there as I did here, or they spent as much time here as they did over there.

But they couldn't possibly take every piece of major legislation right through with their small staff and nurse it from beginning to end. So it was our responsibility to get it up as far as we could, and then they moved in close to passage. But we did provide them with a weekly report in some detail on our major legislation. We had very minor pieces, bills going through that they didn't ever know were passed and a few other people never did.

HACKMAN: Did the relationship between your office and the White House office work out fairly well, or what type problems?

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BIRKHEAD: I had no problems at all. I really can't think of a problem. This was—I don't know.... I know some—I used to hear reports, and there really personally were problems that some of them had. I just never had any. Either they—as Larry O'Brien once said to me, he said, “Don't bother me with all the facts about agriculture. Just tell me who you need for votes, and we'll see if we can get them.” And although Larry's kidding—he would flabbergast a lot of people with what he really knew about legislation we were passing—no, he didn't have an agriculture background, and a lot of agriculture legislation is tortuously involved and detailed. And he didn't get into some of it. But I had no troubles whatsoever.

HACKMAN: I'm going to reverse this tape so we can play it back and...

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE II]

HACKMAN: When you first got started here, then, how did you go about making your initial contacts on the Hill?

BIRKHEAD: Well, I just sort of started off on my own. A lot of people on the Hill, since I'd worked up there, I knew. I started off, I took the agriculture committees first, and I just started with the chairman and went on down, went by and paid my respects and said, “Orville's hired me, and I want to help you. What can I do? What's your problems? And where do we go from here?” And I just spent whatever time I could in those early days, an hour or two a day at least, up there just wandering from office to office. Many of them, you know, it was fifteen minutes and, “Gee, we're glad you're aboard and we'll certainly make every possible use we can.” Others I spent a little time with and we discussed things. But I just started out on that basis. Now some, many of the members I had known, some well, some not so well. So it wasn't a completely foreign experience. And I just, without any directions from Murphy or Freeman, just went up and did it.

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HACKMAN: I've heard it said that one of the big problems the Department of Agriculture had to overcome was the whole Benson [Ezra Taft Benson] image of the Department and his relations with Congress. Was this a particular problem, do you think?

BIRKHEAD: Yeah, this was true that Mr. Benson didn't have the best relations with Congress. And the Department, to a degree, was like a lot of

little fiefdoms that sort of ran on their own, carried on their own relationships with Congress. We tried, without restricting anybody that they couldn't ever talk to a member of Congress, as some of the congressional liaison offices do I know—we never put any such clamps on, but we just tried to make ourselves so valuable in relationships with Congress that the groups started coming to us because we could carry on relations better than they could.

And, of course, we had one real weapon, just the greatest weapon in the world. And that's Orville Freeman. There's just nobody better in relationships with Congress than Freeman, very aware of the importance of relationships with Congress. So I just stole him every time I could and ran him up to the Hill to meet with members, or in groups with members, and pushed him in front of as many committees as I could. And this guy's just the greatest in the business, so he immediately overcame that image of Mr. Benson who was reluctant even to go to the Hill. And when Mr. Benson went to the Hill, he very often went with eight or nine guys. And when they'd ask him a question, he really didn't answer the question. He'd turn it over to somebody else. Mr. Freeman is a great one for briefing himself and knowing the subject better than they do. And he went by himself and, with this kind of personality he's got, made congressional liaisoning a heck of a lot easier than a lot of people thought it would be. And this is the greatest strength we had, plus an awful lot of other good people that came in with him. But he was the key to the whole thing.

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HACKMAN: I'd wondered, as far as the other people go in the Department, who was particularly active and effective on the Hill?

BIRKHEAD: Well, John Duncan, who was our Assistant Secretary at the time—he's not with us any more—for Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation and the Foreign Agriculture Service, had been immediate past president of the Farm Bureau of Georgia but was not nationally, and he had many contacts in the South, a very good guy, very helpful on the Hill. Horace Godfrey [Horace D. Godfrey], who was head of ASCS from North Carolina, was very helpful on the Hill. Ed Jaenke [Edwin A. Jaenke], who was associate administrator of ASCS, had many contacts, had worked on the Hill himself, and had a lot of good contacts up there. And a group like this. John Bagwell became our general counsel, our lawyer, had been in the Department for thirty years or so at the time, and had over that time developed many contacts on the Hill. He was a real able lawyer, a real able guy. And we used these. I didn't build up as big a staff as some of the departments did just because I just considered these guys and they agreed to—they were going to spend a certain amount of their time on the Hill.

HACKMAN: Were there any offices or bureaus or divisions in the Department that caused particular problems in their relations with Congress as far as going around your office?

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BIRKHEAD: No, not really. I thought—I was told when I came down here all kinds of gory stories about what a tough time we'd have. But it really didn't shape up this way. Sure, we'd have disagreements from time to time, but there were no real problems. No. I think we probably had fewer disagreements than a lot of the departments. Freeman developed really a team feeling right from the beginning. And so he sort of broke in one fell swoop this little fiefdom kind of thing that had gone on before, and it was not really a problem.

HACKMAN: You'd said earlier that you weren't much of an issues man. Did you get involved at all as the legislation was written in the Department, or how did this work in the Department?

BIRKHEAD: Well, we, through the Secretary and the Under Secretary and sort of those around the Secretary, and this was sort of a changing group, would develop a general program. Then they'd begin to translate this into what authorities we need to carry it out, what authorities we had we could carry it out, what new authorities we needed. We began to develop legislative proposals that were needed and draw these up, and work with the Bureau of the Budget, obviously, and agree with members of Congress that you could in getting their views and their thoughts and ideas on the kind of program it ought to be. And this whole package eventually came together as a legislative proposal.

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I was fortunate enough, the way the Secretary worked, that I was an integral part of this whole process as it went along. I didn't spend all day with the lawyers while they were actually drafting it, but I stayed with it from the beginning on through and would do a lot of congressional contacts in connection as it went along. But I used guys like Jaenke and Godfrey and others who were much more issue-oriented than I am. If I was going up to see a member to discuss some phase of an idea we had, I'd take a Jaenke or a Godfrey or somebody along with me to back me up when we got into what it was really all about. This whole package sort of came together this way. I'd know the people and what their peculiarities were, and I'd take Jaenke along with me to be sure I didn't get too far off base on the issues.

HACKMAN: As the legislation would develop, would you usually work particularly with the chairman of the committees, or would it be with other members?

BIRKHEAD: Well, it would vary. Sometimes the chairman had particular interest. Obviously, if you want to get anything through up there, you've got to have the chairman go along with you. So I spent more time, I guess, with the chairman than I did with nearly anybody else. But you would find on a particular piece of legislation that X number of members of the committee were for it. You

had no problems with them, and so you'd sort of—you wouldn't disregard them, but you just wouldn't work with them much.

You'd pick out where your problems were, and you'd concentrate on these because we had thirty-five members of the committee in the House and we needed eighteen of them to pass a piece of legislation, and we had fourteen members in the Senate and we needed eight of those—or we had fifteen members, we needed eight of those to pass a piece over there. So you'd figure, well, I've got to find eight guys. Then you'd say this guy, either after talking to him or you just knew what his position was, you'd say, "He's for us. This guy's for us. But we're still six short." Then you'd go out and find the six. And you'd tend to concentrate on those. You tended, just because there are not enough hours

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in the day, not to spend much time with the guys that were for you or the guys you knew were hopelessly against you.

HACKMAN: How closely did you work with the committees' staff? Or how did they become involved in legislation?

BIRKHEAD: Very closely. Very closely. You had to work with them. They're key to getting legislation through; they're the ones that schedule the meetings; they're the ones that explain to the members what the legislation is all about. Yes, I guess—when I said you spend more times with the chairman than anybody else, I meant as far as the members are concerned. You spend more time with the staff than you do all the members, nearly, put together because they're under the direction of the chairman of the committee. But they're the key to the whole operation.

HACKMAN: Were there any particular differences in the way you had to work with the Senate staff from the House staff; particularly in view of the fact that Cooley [Harold D. Cooley] used Bob Poage [W.R. Poage] as a co-chairman there? Did this create any...

BIRKHEAD: Well, as far as the staff's concerned, no. You were dealing with personalities, and you dealt differently with different personalities. But you worked pretty much with the staff the same. They had slightly.... The Senate staff, although somewhat smaller than the House staff, was a little better organized, and things went through a little more smoothly. The House staff, bigger, they tended to splinter a little bit. Sometimes you'd find on a particular bill that somebody over here was really taking the leadership on it when they were down the line in the power structure. It was a little more discombobulated over there, if you know what that word means. So you were never quite sure you were as well organized with the House staff as you were with the Senate staff.

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HACKMAN: We were talking earlier about the farm organizations. As far as the leadership, who was most cooperative? Did any problems come up with James Patton or Herschel Newsom [Herschel David Newsom] of the National Grange?

BIRKHEAD: Not really. Oh, we used to have differences of opinion, as people would. But we had very few real problems with either Newsom or Patton. They were very cooperative, very understanding of what we were trying to do. And except for.... On the broad principles of most of the legislation we sent up, they were in support. Now, we'd get into some disagreements sometimes on the details or specific parts of it. We'd even find Patton up testifying before one of the committees disagreeing with us to some part of the legislation. But on the broad principles, no.

HACKMAN: What about your contacts with other legislative liaison offices in the other departments? How did this work out as far as coordinating it all with the White House?

BIRKHEAD: It worked, I think, as well as it could be expected to work. We were under, of course, our tremendous pressure to get our programs going. And there are just a certain number of hours in a day, and you can't have a lot of time for contact with the other departments and agencies. But through the White House and through the fact that many of these people in the other departments and agencies we knew—we knew each other over the years—you had contact with them, and when they had legislation up, you tried to help them. And very often we'd have meetings at the White House, and we'd divide up members of the House or the Senate and say, "I'll contact this guy in connection with, your piece of legislation, or I'll take this state or these several people."

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Of course, we tended to take more the agriculture types. And then we'd take some time to try to help pass a housing bill or something the Treasury Department, the Labor Department, somebody else had up, and when we had farm legislation up, they'd do the same for us. This was organized more through the White House than it was ourselves. We tried to the degree we could, to keep the other departments and agencies a little bit informed of the problems that we were facing, but we didn't do a very good job of it.

HACKMAN: Did you feel that any of them were particularly reluctant to give you help?

BIRKHEAD: No. Never found any reluctance. No. Always a real desire to try to help. No, I really can't say I ever remember of a guy saying, "No, I can't help you very much on this one." Now, you know, usually when you got down to that point, the guys you had left which you were trying to influence were

pretty tough ones. And they couldn't always make very many promises, but I don't remember of a single instance where a guy said, "No, I can't help you."

HACKMAN: Well, moving on to some specific legislation, then, what do you recall about that effort in early '61 to pass the Emergency Feed Grains legislation?

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BIRKHEAD: Well, that—I sort of got my baptism of fire. I didn't come in on January 21st. I came in February 20th, I guess. So, things had really sort of, in a sense, been going about a month around here before I really came on board. They were beginning to get into this one when I came in. And so I walked in one morning, and about an hour later, I was in a meeting on how in the heck we were going to get that bill passed. We were all sort of floundering around. But this was during that first blush of the honeymoon, the new Administration, all the new members. We were able to move things a lot faster, and guys asked a lot less questions at that point. You know, they figured, "God, if this is what the President, the new Secretary of Agriculture wants, and I can't see how its going to ruin America immediately, why, let's go along with it." Although when we got to the floor, it came a straight showdown vote.

We picked up practically no Republican support. But as far as the Democrats were concerned, except for a very few, we had very good support. The thing went very fast and got passed very fast. Two or three months later a guy'd say, "Hey, what the heck was that bill I voted for you back there in February or March or whenever it was?" This one was really passed in the first blush of the honeymoon. So that it was really a very simple bill to pass in a sense. It was a good bill, and they were all very happy they did it, but a heck of a lot of them didn't know what the heck they were voting for and really didn't care. This was something the President wanted, the Administration wanted, Freeman wanted, and they were just not about in the mood to stop him at that point. So it went through despite... Oh, you could hear all kinds of gory horror stories about it, but it went a lot better than most people will admit.

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HACKMAN: Well, moving on from that temporary legislation to the more permanent legislation in '61, what do you recall about how this new approach, that Cochrane [Willard W. Cochrane] approach, the procedure of writing on specific commodities and placing it with the farm communities and the Secretary of Agriculture? How did that work out in...

BIRKHEAD: This ran into real struggles up there. First, unfortunately, Willard had a bad—people had built for Willard a bad reputation as a radical guy who believed that, you know, as they put it, that farmers ought to be put in a straitjacket and completely controlled by the federal government. And then Willard himself, a lovely guy and one of the really brilliant people I've ever met, is not the most diplomatic person in dealing with people. And he had some troubles before some of

the committees up there. They'd ask him questions, and Willard, in this great honesty he has, he'd give them the answer. The politician would never get caught dead giving the answer he gave. But Willard said, "Well, isn't that the truth?" And I said, "Yeah, that's the truth, but, you know, you say it this way, not that way." And the Farm Bureau seized upon the fact that Willard had this reputation as being some kind of evil radical. And the Republicans were looking for a farm issue. So they built this thing up as, well, as they put it, the Cochrane-Freeman farm proposal. By this time the honeymoon was a little bit over, and people were starting to take a harder look at things. And so these all combined to make it a little more difficult. It was a rather drastic departure from what had been going on.

HACKMAN: Right.

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BIRKHEAD: The voluntary feed grain program we passed earlier and the Emergency Feed Grain program wasn't that much different from what we'd had. But this was the beginning of this attempt to get mandatory programs.

HACKMAN: What do you recall about the development of that legislation in the Department? I've always heard that there were different views as far as to whether this approach should be taken or whether they should stay with the commodity-by-commodity approach. Who favored the various viewpoints?

BIRKHEAD: Well, there were disagreements in the Department although, at that point in time, I think the majority of the new people that Freeman had brought in pretty much favored the Cochrane-type approach, if you want to put that label on it. It tended to be the older hands around here that had been around for a long time that were concerned about it. But it was not a snap decision. God, I can't tell you how many nights we sat around here till 2 or 3 in the morning wrangling over it—not really disagreeing violently, but trying to argue all the ins and outs of it, trying to fit into what we knew about agriculture at the time, and what we thought the future might hold, and what effect this might have on the future.

But there were some disagreements. I think more people now will say they disagreed with it than did at that time only because it didn't make it, you know. And a lot of people like to say, "Oh sure, I knew the riots were going to occur in Detroit." And they didn't have any idea they were, but they just wanted to make it sound as if they have some knowledge they really didn't have.

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HACKMAN: How much influence did some of the new people that Secretary Freeman brought in, especially from Minnesota, have—for instance, Dorothy Jacobson and Tom Hughes [Thomas R. Hughes] and some of these people that worked with him—as far as actual legislation went?

BIRKHEAD: Not very much. At that point, Tom was so busy getting the Department put together, and the administrative activities of the Department and this kind of thing, that really he was not tremendously involved in legislative kinds of programs. Dorothy was doing the major part of the Secretary's speech writing at the time. And although she participated and sat in on a lot of these things, she was not really, I would say, a policy maker as far as legislation was concerned. The so-called Minnesota mafia really didn't, outside of Cochrane and Freeman, really didn't have very much impact on the policy of the farm program, the legislation as it developed.

HACKMAN: Was the decision finally made, then, to use this new approach in '61, made here in the Department? Or was it finally decided in conjunction with the White House, do you recall?

BIRKHEAD: Well, it was made here in the Department. The White House concurred in it after it was made. But it was made here in the Department. I think to a great extent, during the early times of the Kennedy Administration, that really Freeman was on his own completely as far as agriculture legislation was concerned.

HACKMAN: What was the response of the people on the hill? You talked about Willard Cochrane's testimony, but what in general were the objections that people, the committee and Congress as a whole, had on this legislation?

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BIRKHEAD: They were concerned that this.... Most of the members on the hill, not really being agriculture oriented anymore, the urban, liberal type Democrats said, "For God sakes, don't mess up our lives with trying to explain what an agriculture bill is. Just tell us: if I vote for it, am I going to be in terrible trouble in my next campaign?" And you'd assure them that if we were going to have a stable and adequate food supply in this country and try to hold down the, at that point, of course, trying to get the surpluses down, this was the way we felt it had to be done. And they'd say, "Fine."

The Republicans, of course, were opposed. And we just had three or four Republicans that ever really supported you on anything that was basically an Administration proposal. And then you got to the hard core of forty or fifty people that you really had to work on. Their big problem was that—and most of these forty or fifty had some agriculture back home and many of them had strong farm bureaus back home, and they were faced with this problem of, "How do I justify to my constituents that I voted for that fire breathing, horned Willard Cochrane?" This was the real problem you had. Most of them really felt that the proposal had merit. But the real problem you faced with them was, "God, can I get too far off the reservation and be labeled as a radical back home?"

HACKMAN: What about the feeling that this would be giving too much power to the Secretary of Agriculture?

BIRKHEAD: This was, of course, the thing that was used, the device that this was turning the farmers, their whole lives, and they dramatized this, you know, "A farmer can't get up in the morning without checking with the Secretary of Agriculture, and brush his teeth without checking with the Secretary of Agriculture, can't have breakfast without checking with the Secretary of Agriculture." And they picked out every fine point in the legislation that they could find that mentions the Secretary of Agriculture and just beat this and beat this and beat this and used this.

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HACKMAN: What was the reaction of the committee chairmen, Senator Ellender [Allen Joseph Ellender] and Congressman Cooley?

BIRKHEAD: Both of them, it's my honest opinion that both of them favored the approach. Both of them were terribly concerned about what the majority of their committee—Mr. Cooley particularly had a tough committee. He had twenty-one Democrats and fourteen Republicans. If the Republicans stayed firm—and Mr. Hoeven [Charles B. Hoeven] of Iowa, who was the ranking Republican, pretty generally held the fourteen Republicans together—they only needed four Democrats to have the majority. And so he had deep concerns about holding a majority on his committee. Mr. Ellender had some similar problems, but somewhat less, I think, than Mr. Cooley. So their real concern was with the majority on the committee. This was the tough struggle, and it was tough. It was not easy.

HACKMAN: Do you recall that the White House gave particular help on this legislation?

BIRKHEAD: Yeah. They put their shoulder to the wheel much as they could. We worked up lists of members who were on the fence, where we had questions, where we had problems. They went to work. They got liaisons from other departments to work on particular members that we didn't have much going with, and made contacts on the Hill with the members of the committee. And the President got into this some, not to a great extent. Of course, I think there's a lot of stories about the number of calls a President makes to the Hill. Any President, even including Mr. Johnson, makes a lot less calls than most people think. But to the degree it was necessary, Mr. Kennedy got into it and made calls and discussed with the members their problems, and why they couldn't support it.

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HACKMAN: There's always been a lot of people who have had the opinion that President Kennedy was reluctant to make contacts on the Hill and didn't like working with the Hill. What...

BIRKHEAD: I never felt this. I think he was reluctant just, you know, if somebody would walk in and said, "Hey, here's fifty members we've got trouble with. Would you call them up?" I think he was reluctant, and I would be if I was President, be reluctant just to make calls. When you brought him a list of names, he wanted to know that you'd gone every inch you could go, that you had contacted everybody you could, that you'd done everything you could with the members, and that you'd gotten down to the hard core, and here they were. The President, the demands on his time are just beyond comprehension. I think there was a reluctance just to be given a bunch of names to call.

I think probably he, maybe in the early times—I don't remember any with us, but I'd heard rumors that he'd gotten burned a few times, you know. He'd call some guy because they'd given him a list of names, and the guy'd say, "Hell, I've got no problem with this. I'm all for it." It just was not good staff work; it really hadn't been checked out. I think he was—I don't remember with any agriculture thing any real reluctance on his part, except just the question, you know, "Have you really got these guys checked out?" There may have been, but I was never personally aware of it. He didn't understand agriculture as well as he did some things, but he understood a heck of a lot more about it than a lot of people knew.

HACKMAN: What do you recall about the participation of the farm organizations in this specific piece of legislation in '61?

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BIRKHEAD: Well, they lined up pretty much as you'd expect them. The Farm Bureau opposing it pretty violently. And the Farmers Union, the Grange, and the MFA, then the Missouri Farmers Association, now the Mid-continent Farmers Association, supporting it, and doing what they could to try to get it passed. They had this sort of traditional line up. Of course, this was the first real one they had had under the new Administration with this whole new thing. Previously, you know, under Benson, the setup had gone in the other direction. Generally, the Farmers Union and the Grange were in opposition, and the Farm Bureau was in favor. So this was sort of, quote, a "baptism of fire" to a certain extent.

HACKMAN: I've heard that at that time the introduction on the Hill of a number of other government reorganization bills might have created some reluctance toward this new approach in the Department of Agriculture.

BIRKHEAD: Some. Yes, this was true to some extent. I never felt that we really were hurt by this although I'd occasionally run across a guy who I don't think was ever with us in the first place, but who would come forth with some thought, you know, "Well, goddamn it, you guys were just changing the

whole government down there too suddenly,” you know and this kind of thing. I honestly—maybe thinking back over it again at a later time I'd change my mind—I honestly really don't think this was a major problem we faced.

HACKMAN: I think I had seen it mentioned specifically with regard to Sam Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn] at that time. Do you know if that was at all true?

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BIRKHEAD: I don't really, I don't—I'm not aware of any.... No. The Speaker never expressed this thought to me. He may have had some feelings. I never ran across it as far as we were concerned. There was some concern that there was a drastic upheaval going on, and, boys, let's don't rock the boat too much, too fast. But, I honestly don't think this was our real—God, I think some guys used this, as I say, as an excuse. I don't think it was very real.

HACKMAN: Now this title I of that '61 act never did get out of the committees, but eventually legislation was passed. How much help did you feel you got from the leadership in the House and Senate? Or how effective were they, Mansfield [Mike Mansfield], and Carl Albert, and these people?

BIRKHEAD: Well, in the House your leadership on farm bills was really Carl Albert [Carl B. Albert]. This is an able guy and knew agriculture. Speaker used to say, “I never vote against an agriculture bill. And I don't think I ever will, if I ever get a chance to vote again.” But he said Carl Albert was always the leader. And he always went along with us. He was, gee, he was just a tower of strength in getting this legislation moving. Hale Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs] worked very diligently. Legislation got to the floor, lining up votes on the floor. In the Senate, the real agriculture leader was Humphrey. Mr. Mansfield supported the legislation, but the guy that really carried the load was Humphrey. And when we had a bill up, we just moved into his office and worked out of his office as long as the bill was there. We got good support from the House leadership. It was Albert in the House and Humphrey in the Senate. They were the ones that really put me in.

HACKMAN: Now you had said you had a meeting at...

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BIRKHEAD: I've got to leave at 4:15 to go with the Assistant Secretary uptown. I need about five minutes before I go, and that's all and so. And I don't even want to go.

HACKMAN: Well, listen, why don't we...

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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