

**James B. Carey Oral History Interview—5/26/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** James B. Carey  
**Interviewer:** John F. Henning  
**Date of Interview:** May 26, 1964  
**Length:** 19 pages

**Biographical Note**

Carey, President of the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (IUE) from 1950-1965, and vice president of the AFL-CIO from 1955-1965, discusses the IUE's close relationship with John F. Kennedy (JFK) during his years in Congress and as president, and JFK's interest in international labor matters, among other issues.

**Access**

Open.

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed March 10, 1967, copyright of these materials has been assigned to United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

James B. Carey, recorded interview by John F. Henning, May 26, 1964, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Gift of Personal Statement

By Mr. James B. Carey

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 as amended (63 Stat. 377) and regulations issued thereunder, I, James B. Carey, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder and all literary property rights will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.
3. A revision of the above stipulation governing access to the aforesaid material may be entered into between the donor

and the Archivist of the United States or his designee if it appears desirable to revise the conditions herein stipulated.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

Signed

James B. Carey

Date

March 7, 1967

Accepted

Robert H. DeLoach

Archivist of the United States

Date

3/10/67

James B. Carey

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	1960 Democratic National Convention
3	Offering Edward M. Kennedy positions in the IUE labor union
4	Close relationship between John F. Kennedy's (JFK) and the IUE
7	JFK's legislative interests
8, 15	JFK's interest in international labor issues
12	Lyndon B. Johnson
13	IUE's response to JFK's assassination
18	JFK's interest in labor issues during his years in Congress

Oral History Interview

with

James B. Carey

May 26, 1964

By John F. Henning

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HENNING: My name is John F. Henning. I am the Under Secretary of Labor, and I am interviewing James B. Carey on this date, May 26, 1964, in connection with the Oral History Project which will be a part of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library effort. Mr. Carey is President of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. He is also a member of the Executive Council and of the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO. As a member of the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO he is a vice president of that organization. Mr. Carey is also the Secretary-Treasurer of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. He is a national labor figure and has been identified with national labor activities since the 1930s when he was one of the leading figures in the organization of the CIO; since the time of the AFL-CIO merger he has played a leading, directing role in the united labor movement.

CAREY: John, you referred to my early days in the labor movement, and you are right: I was elected National President in 1933 at a very young age. That reference reminds me of a discussion I had with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles in 1960. I am only a little reluctant to admit it now, but that year I was for Symington [Stuart Symington, II] as the Democratic nominee for President and for Jack Kennedy as the Democratic nominee for vice president. In a discussion with Jack Kennedy at the Convention (or just prior to it, in fact) in Los Angeles, I explained to Jack Kennedy that I thought

[ -1- ]

he ought to be the candidate of the Democratic Party for the vice presidency, and explained that if he succeeded in being vice president he would serve for two terms—eight years—and then be the candidate for the presidency and would serve there eight years and would graduate from the highest office of the land before he was 60 years of age. During this discussion of why I was for a Symington-Kennedy ticket, Kennedy quietly asked me, “Jim, when you were elected secretary-treasurer of the CIO in 1938 at the age of 26, how many terms as president had you served? Was it five or six as president of your union?” He got me thinking. How could I be opposed to a candidate merely because he was young? But the conference ended and I was still for Symington and Kennedy as the slate of the Democratic Party.

My wife [Margaret Carey] was not with me at the time but she was for Jack Kennedy for president and Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] for vice president, at the time of that Convention. Even though I was for Senator Symington for president and Senator Kennedy for vice president, the members of the IUE [International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine, and Furniture Workers] were vigorously for Senator Kennedy, especially in the New England areas, and we all held him in exceedingly high esteem. In fact, I recall one little incident that brought that out clearly in one of our discussions. The IUE in Massachusetts deeply appreciated Senator Kennedy’s activity in helping them in the fight against the Communist-controlled UE long before he even became a Senator; he had made statements that might have not been considered politically wise at the time, but he demonstrated his courage. I recall after the vigorous campaign and the election in which all the IUE people were solidly for Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], we had a little meeting with President-elect Kennedy the night before the Inauguration at the Carlton Hotel. I sat on President Kennedy’s right and President Meany [George Meany] of the AFL-

[ -2- ]

CIO, sat on his left. During the course of this dinner meeting, I said, “Jack, will you please pass me the cream? That may be the last time I’ll be able to call you Jack. Tomorrow it will be Mr. President.” The President remarked that he thought his labor friends might continue to call him Jack, but the respect for the office is such that all the labor leaders, of course, addressed him as Mr. President. But we also had a deep regard and respect for this man, as a man, as well as a public official.

One of the great reasons why the electrical manufacturing workers were so attracted to President Kennedy—previously Senator Kennedy and Congressman Kennedy—during his too-short public service and too-brief life, was not only due to his convictions and work but also to the kind of family from which he was derived. Our admiration went to others of the family, as well as to Jack Kennedy.

I recall meeting Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy], by accident, on a train heading for Washington. I boarded the train in New York and bumped into Ted Kennedy and I offered him a position with the IUE. I said, “It’s about time that a member of the Kennedy clan worked directly for the labor movement.” But I think back now—the offer of \$7500 was not important to the Kennedys but it was the rate of the job. This was before he was attending

school in Virginia and he had not finished his college work in Massachusetts at Harvard. In fact, it might have been his entry to the University of Virginia—the first trip down. It seems to me it was that time of year. Later I had the opportunity of offering Ted Kennedy a position as head of our Civic Affairs Department which would have included legislative activity and being the head of our political activity, a position now held by Ed Rovner [Edward Rovner] and the position formerly held by George Weaver [George L-P. Weaver], who is now the Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs.

[ -3- ]

On that occasion it was by telephone. I called Ted Kennedy and said that since President Kennedy, his brother, had the wisdom to take Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] as Secretary of Labor out of the ranks of labor, and since Secretary of Labor Goldberg had lifted George Weaver from the position of being head of our legislative and political activity in the IUE, I thought that the replacement for George Weaver ought to be Ted Kennedy. The job then paid \$13,000-a-year. This was a much higher rate than Ted Kennedy was then receiving from the State of Massachusetts. I think he was employed at the rate of \$1-a-year. Well, in both cases Ted Kennedy said this would be a challenge.

I don't think it would have hurt the IUE to have as its legislative and political representative the brother of the President and also the brother of the Attorney General; but this is, I think, an example of the close relationship that the whole Kennedy group had with the IUE and before the IUE actually came into existence as a union—when we were part of the UE and engaged in an internal struggle to free our organization of the Communist domination that existed in the Union since 1941.

That period in the history of our organization from 1941 to 1949 was a very, very critical period since we had not yet been established as a union. We were part of the UE and were fighting its Communist domination, and had not yet had first indications of success when democratic unionism's love of John Kennedy and respect for his courage came to light. He helped us in fighting our battles from Pittsfield in western Massachusetts to Lynn in eastern Massachusetts. He made many statements in our behalf even though we were only part of a struggling group. We called ourselves the "UE Members For Democratic Action." Jack Kennedy, at that time, took on some pro-Communists who, at least in a parliamentary sense, held effective positions in CIO unions at that time in Massachusetts.

[ -4- ]

He even referred to those early campaigns when he was President. He said: "I know Mr. Carey and I know what his Union stands for. It has interested itself not only in the economic well-being of its members, and that is a continuing task, but it has carried the fight for the best interests of this country for a strong American free trade union for 15 years and did so at a time when it was not an easy job—when a good many who were beating their chests about America were not as active as this Union was back at the end of the '40s."

He lauded the Union; he lauded its leadership and he continued by saying to this IUE conference in February 1963 that:



“Tomorrow we are sending to the Congress of the United States a civil rights program. We have used our Executive Powers, but there is the greatest amount of unfinished business here. So I think this conference is worthwhile. I can imagine no group of Americans who should feel more prime satisfaction in walking around the White House and standing on my grass, which has just been planted, than all of you. We are delighted to have you and I appreciate your coming to see me.”

This was to 160 delegates to the IUE’s Annual Full Citizenship Conference. We called it the Full Citizenship and World Affairs Conference. We confer on the economic conditions that exist, here and abroad, and we confer on the full spectrum of domestic issues. It is an effort on the part of our union to make sure our own credentials are in order and to make sure that our nation’s credentials are in order. President Kennedy at this time, despite his busy schedule, invited the delegates to the White House and had those remarks to make about our organization.

[ -5 - ]

We have good reason to cherish his memory and the Philip Murray Building annex that is now under construction, will have on its seventh floor a conference room that will be a memorial to John F. Kennedy. It will comfortably seat 40 delegates, and enable them to engage in simultaneously translated discussions in five different languages. It will be a memorial in recognition of President Kennedy’s activity in behalf of international labor. He had such a complete understanding of how labor can do things internationally that cannot be done by governments, just as labor organizations can do things domestically that governments cannot do.

This memorial to John F. Kennedy will provide an opportunity for labor organizations to make much more effective the growing number of international labor conferences that take place. There are some unions in South America and Asia, even in Europe, as well as Africa, that are hesitant to use government facilities for their conferences. This is particularly true of Latin American trade unions whose experiences with their governments are unlike the experiences that we have in this country. Thus the value of this memorial room.

So next to the Woodrow Wilson Room, that’s in the old section of the Philip Murray Building, will be this conference room and, of course, it will be identified as the John F. Kennedy International Memorial Room.

All this is going to be done and much more by the IUE because of our very special relationship to President Kennedy. In addition, the IUE and its members will play their part in the John F. Kennedy Memorial in Washington as well as in creation of the Library on the campus at Harvard.

John, you might be interested in knowing that I recently visited the Harvard Campus to address a meeting at the Business School at Harvard. Now the Library site, I suppose, will cut a little bit of sun from the Harvard School of Business Administration, but it will certainly add to

[ -6 - ]

the light that will shine in that area. Interestingly enough, the club that sponsored this meeting is headed by the son of one of America's outstanding unionists, William Schnitzler [William F. Schnitzler]. I was surprised to see the son of a labor leader in that capacity at Harvard. Back a few years when I worked as a general organizer for William Green [William R. Green] and the AFL in 1932-1933 and 1934, it seems to me that the labor leaders had in mind sending their sons to Princeton as did William Green and as did John L. Lewis, so I think that the influences that the Kennedys brought to Harvard were very good. It helps to broaden the whole horizon and the Library situated there at the place that President Kennedy himself selected will be fully equipped and serviced with the products manufactured by his friends, the workers in the electrical industry. By its very nature this type of library will be as modern and forward-looking as President Kennedy's views were on economic and social questions. I guess it will be the most electronically-equipped library in the entire world, and the students and teachers in days to come will have the benefit of the up-to-date equipment in utilizing their time to the fullest in knowing John Kennedy.

His wit was quite unusual and, of course, he made us all feel older. Of course, some of us are older in years, but at the same time he made everyone feel younger.

His speeches to labor union meetings must be preserved. I would hope that through modern recording devices we can preserve some of the more intimate matters, discussions and decisions that Kennedy was involved in. He had a very vigorous attitude toward Medicare, especially when he expressed himself as being in favor of a more universal approach to questions of health of the Nation. He reminded me so much of President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] in many respects. I suggest that he also had many of the intellectual features and characteristics of Eleanor Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt], combined with a tremendous vigor.

[-7-]

I think we would not see in our time enactment of the new civil rights legislation had it not been for John F. Kennedy—not just the message of Kennedy in 1963—but the work he put in as a Senator and as a member of the House before that. In the area of legislation as regards medical care, although it had not yet been enacted in the form that he recommended, I think we have taken a big step and long strides toward the ultimate fulfillment of the goals he had in mind that he had hoped would be completed through his first term in the White House.

Shortly after the erection of the Wall between Communist Berlin and Western Berlin the labor leaders of the democratic world, the heads of the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions], thought it would be symbolic to have a portion of their meetings, which were scheduled at the Brussels headquarters of the ICFTU, moved right to the Berlin Wall.

I was asked by President Kennedy to deliver to that meeting of the ICFTU in Berlin and to a mass meeting that was assembled in connection with it a deeply meaningful message. It was one of the greatest thrills of my life to carry a message from the President of the United States to the people in Berlin. Willy Brandt, the Mayor of Berlin, addressed the meeting, as did the officers of the ICFTU, and one representative of each continent was

selected, and this was the occasion when I presented President Kennedy's message to the people of Berlin. A few hours before I left Washington to travel to Berlin, the President's message was delivered to me. I had seen a draft of his message and a word had been changed, I believe by the State Department, from "lofty" to "aloof." When I received the message back from President Kennedy he had changed the word back to its original form in his own handwriting.

When that message was delivered to this mass meeting of thousands of Berliners, to the labor leaders of Germany and the ICFTU leaders, it was

[-8-]

received with tremendous enthusiasm. I was not as surprised as many, when Kennedy himself appeared in Berlin, to see the enthusiasm of the freedom-loving people of Berlin which is situated so deep into the area of Communist Germany. The opportunity of seeing those films of President Kennedy in Berlin and the reaction of the Berliners when President Kennedy said, in German, "I am a Berliner," will, I think, be an inspiration to young people for many, many years to come. To observe his informal method of addressing a gathering, his sense of freedom and the way he expressed it, whether it was in Berlin or whether it was in the Ireland of his forebears or any place throughout the world, is an opportunity which perhaps we should have had with leaders like President Wilson [Woodrow Wilson] and others. President Kennedy was able to win the support and the enthusiasm of the people generally and even in the remotest areas of the Nation. In traveling to Africa and to Asia he would sense the close relationship that existed between our President and the United States and the people in these other parts of the world.

I had an opportunity to present another message from President Kennedy—this one to the 10th Anniversary Convention of Denki Roren, the Electrical Workers Union of Japan. That organization is a counterpart of ours. They faced up to some of the same struggles that the IUE was confronted with even before it became known as the IUE. At the time of this convention of Denki Roren, and for years previously, the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions was attempting to make this independent union of electrical workers of Japan part of their set-up and they had representatives there as well as our American union. I also had the honor of representing the ICFTU at that meeting. It was at that convention, after hearing this message from President Kennedy delivered to them by a labor leader from the United States, and also hearing a message from the representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions, which is a

[-9-]

Communist-dominated organization, that the Convention of Denki Roren voted overwhelmingly to perfect its relations with the ICFTU, the International Metalworkers' Federation, and the American trade unions. And so, John, these were two thrilling occasions for me to express the views of President Kennedy to two extremely important trade union meetings: one, as I said, in Berlin, and the other in Japan, both at very critical times. The courage of President Kennedy in permitting an American labor leader to express his words to foreign labor union meetings had a terrific impact because his words on both these

occasions—those two messages—are a part of President Kennedy’s contribution to the solidarity of the freedom-loving free trade unionists of the world during periods of stress and struggle and trial.

John, I was recently interrogated for a pre-trial examination at which time the opposing lawyer said, “Mr. Carey, did you have lunch with the President at the White House?” And I replied, “Yes, sir.” He said, “When was that?” And I asked, “Which President are you referring to? I had lunch at the White House with President Roosevelt, President Truman [Harry S. Truman], even with President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], as well as with President Kennedy.” The lawyer said, “I am referring to President Kennedy.” I said, “Yes, sir.” He asked, “When did it take place?” I said, “Before President Kennedy’s assassination.” I didn’t know the date of the particular luncheon he was referring to. And then this lawyer said, “Did you discuss with President Kennedy some matters relating to Puerto Rico?” I said, “Yes, on that occasion I was seated to the President’s left and he leaned over and said, ‘How are things going with the IUE?’ and I said, ‘Mr. President, we are doing quite well. However, there’s some material that comes out of Puerto Rico that mainland employers are using adversely to bar winning labor board elections. This material was presented to the FBI and the

[-10-]

Department of Justice representatives.’ The President said, ‘Well, have you seen Ted?’ I said, ‘You mean Bob?’ and he said, ‘Oh, yes, I mean the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy.’ I said, ‘Yes, I have seen the Attorney General on this matter.’”

This was an interesting item to me. That was the end of the discussion of that matter. But I have seven sisters and three brothers and I notice that members of my family sometimes refer to John when they mean Bill and sometimes refer to Adelaide when they mean another sister. In this case, it was a similar thing that made me feel very much at home when even the President of the United States, John Kennedy, could make the same kind of mistake that we make right within our own family with regard to mixing up brothers and sisters.

I had occasion to explain to Jack Kennedy that I, too, was raised surrounded with great wealth. My father was the paymaster of the Philadelphia Mint and my brother Joe and I would sometimes go with him when he was going up to make a payroll on a Sunday and we would play surrounded by barrels of gold and silver coins and had access to the vaults. Of course, there was a big difference: that money was not available for our family use, as it was in the case of Kennedy. But discussing with Jack Kennedy some little items of that nature gave me a sort of warm feeling that the Nation was in good hands—when you could even joke and kid with him and disagree with, as well as support, his views. In fact, I think he enjoyed our restrained ribbing when the labor movement was pressing for greater programs, more extensive programs, than the President felt that could be supported by Congress at this particular time.

But there was never a time when there was any question about his objectives or his purposes. He was for the United States and for the people at all times and this motivated him whether he was dealing in

[-11-]

international affairs or whether he was dealing in domestic affairs. And I would like to say that I felt that we were wrong when we were concerned about the President seeking out and securing as his running mate in 1960 Lyndon Johnson. I was quite fearful and expressed myself at the time that Lyndon Johnson would not be in complete sympathy and harmony with the views of President Kennedy in areas such as civil rights and I later had to admit that Jack Kennedy was right. And this was brought home on one of my trips abroad when I was in Germany just as Lyndon Johnson was leaving. He was then, of course, vice president of the United States, but the enthusiasm for Johnson and Johnson's enthusiasm for Kennedy well established the fact that Jack Kennedy was right to anticipate the contribution that Lyndon Johnson would make to the Kennedy program. Of course, this is known to the world today but it wasn't at the time and it certainly was not as clear in 1960 as it became in 1961-1962 and especially following the untimely death of President Kennedy. We now can evaluate John F. Kennedy's wisdom in choosing Johnson as his running mate by the manner in which Lyndon Johnson has furthered the program enunciated by President Kennedy. In fact, I might say that in my opinion Lyndon Johnson can get through the Congress of the United States President Kennedy's program to a larger extent and with fewer compromises than President Kennedy himself could have gotten the program through. That holds not only for civil rights but for many, many other questions, such as Medicare and fiscal legislation. I think the fact that Lyndon Johnson is in the position to make a contribution even greater than what Kennedy could have secured through legislation is one of the great tributes to the foresight, judgment and leadership of President Kennedy.

Right after the death of President Kennedy, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the IUE's International Executive Board, we dealt with the

[-12-]

nation's loss and our loss and we adopted unanimously a statement that seemed to express well the feelings of the members of all American unions, as well as our own—a resolution quoted from the sentiments and convictions of John F. Kennedy in the masterful way he had of putting words together. I'd like, if I may, to record that action of our International Executive Board in behalf of the more than 425,000 workers we represent:

“There was something about him that from the moment he moved into the presidency conveyed self-confidence, and more important inspired confidence in others. He told us, and we knew deep in our hearts that he meant every word: ‘I believe in an America where every man or woman who wants to work can find work, where a growing economy provides new jobs and new markets for a growing nation, without inflating the workers' prices beyond the reach of his family budget.’

“We of organized labor sensed his self-confidence when he addressed the AFL-CIO convention one week before his death, and told us that he now saw unemployment as the nation's number one problem. The confidence we sensed in him was his belief that he could do something about that problem and we absorbed that confidence and felt sure that he could and would. For John F. Kennedy was the unique president who not only understood the labor

movement but also sympathized with working men and women who, through no fault of their own, suffered the hardships and deprivations of unemployment. 'We have long since decided as a nation,' President Kennedy told us in a strong, vibrant voice, 'that we will not turn our backs upon workers and their families undergoing the hardships of

[-13-]

unemployment. Large-scale unemployment during a recession is bad enough,' he declared, 'but large-scale unemployment during a period of prosperity would be intolerable.' Yet John F. Kennedy became the presidential heir to four postwar recessions, four prolonged periods of mass unemployment and varying degrees of business stagnation. John F. Kennedy was determined, and he told us so vehemently, that he would move heaven and earth to prevent another recession occurring during his administration. When John F. Kennedy assumed the highest office that was in the power of his fellow citizens to bestow upon him, he sounded a call that those fellow citizens will not soon forget. He told the Nation, 'Now the trumpet summons us again, a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, a struggle against the common enemies of man; tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.'

President Kennedy's death should mean for you and me and everyone that now the trumpet summons us again to the struggle that he had pledged himself to at the AFL-CIO convention and a number one struggle—the struggle against poverty and unemployment, deprivation and economic injustice. John F. Kennedy's tragic death, I say, should be the trumpet summoning all of us to carry on his good fight, which is really our fight, our fight on behalf of the world's underprivileged, the world's dispossessed. We can do no less than answer the summons and carry on the struggle until it is won."

That is the statement adopted by the IUE International Executive Board and it was carried far and wide throughout the IUE and other unions and it represented, I am sure, the feelings of millions of union members.

[-14-]

The message from President Kennedy to Denki Roren, which is the Electrical Workers Union of Japan, on its 10th Anniversary Convention, was short and to the point and had the impact I spoke of earlier of helping to win Denki Roren to a closer association with the Democratic labor movements of the world through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, especially in the ICFTU's struggle against the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions for the loyalties and affiliations of many new unions. His message, I think, is well worth recording:

"I have asked my friend, James B. Carey, President of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers AFL-CIO, and a vice president of the AFL-CIO, to carry my greetings and congratulations to the 10th Anniversary Convention of Denki Roren.

"Your union and President Carey's union have much in common in addition to being the largest unions of electrical manufacturing workers in Japan and the United States

respectively. The two unions are approximately the same age, and both have successfully opposed the efforts of totalitarian forces to capture control of the workers in their industries.

“To Denki Roren, its officers, and members, on its 10th Anniversary Convention I send my warm congratulations and my best wishes for many more decades of service to the workers it represents and to democratic unionism.

“I am happy that President Carey has invited a delegation of Denki Roren to visit the United States and attend the IUE’s 10th Constitutional Convention in September. I am sure it will be a fruitful and enjoyable experience.

“In recent years Japan and the United States have had invaluable exchanges of business groups, religious bodies, cultural

[-15-]

missions and athletic teams. I believe that the regular exchange of trade union delegates can be equally valuable in cementing the ties of friendship and brotherhood between the two nations.

“For that reason I greatly hope that it will prove possible for Denki Roren to accept President Carey’s invitation and attend the IUE’s convention. I also hope that it may prove possible for me to greet the delegation personally when it comes to the United States.

“I will, of course, look forward to hearing President Carey’s report of his visit. I appreciate your hospitality to him which I am sure will be reciprocated when the Denki Roren representatives come to the United States in September.

(signed) John F. Kennedy”

On October 26, 1961, I received from the White House the following letter:

“Dear Mr. Carey:

Secretary Goldberg has informed me that you will represent the AFL-CIO at the ICFTU Council meeting in Berlin on October 27. Please deliver for me to the workers attending the rally of the Federation of German Trade Unions, the enclosed message. Also I send my good wishes to the ICFTU. The free trade unions of the world are again demonstrating their force as spokesmen for freedom and opponents of tyranny.

(signed) John F. Kennedy”

And enclosed was this message:

[-16-]

“My warm greetings to the Federation of German Trade Unions meeting today in a great demonstration of support for the cause of freedom.

“Free union movements are focal points for the aspirations of countless millions who hope for a better life and a freer voice. In an age of mass poverty and mass illiteracy over wide reaches of the world, and of concentrated wealth and skill in other parts, man is faced by the moral imperative of justice. Those who would deny or pervert this moral charge are the corrupters, not the makers of history. The necessity for freedom and the realization of

human dignity in freedom, is a greater force for change in human affairs than any sword, any wall, any tyrant's club. One cannot shut the desire for freedom out from a man's heart; the attempt in itself is an admission of failure.

"Free union movements, while they differ broadly from nation to nation, are founded upon right—the right of the individual to a fair return for his labor, the right of the people to benefit from their toil, the right to enjoy in economic life freedom from want. Man should not have to depend upon the largess of an aloof state for the satisfaction of what is his by right.

"For this reason, unions in the free world are the very bulwark of individual right, the voice of conscience, the living examples that free men can control their own destinies. These are some of the reasons why you gather today. The American people support you in your resolution and commend your determination."

[-17-]

John, I have before me a copy of the picture of Congressman John F. Kennedy taken back in September 1951 at the time he was very actively helping us in our fight to recover the electrical manufacturing industry for free trade unionism. Of course, that was before the merger of the AFL-CIO, and the fight that CIO was engaged in and the IUE in particular was against the Communist-controlled UE. John F. Kennedy had the courage to put his neck out in this situation long before it was certain that the IUE would be successful over the UE in Massachusetts and New England. This picture shows him much younger, of course, than the pictures that are generally seen of John F. Kennedy during the period he was in the Senate or during the period that he was the President of the United States. It still shows the boyish charm that he possessed then as a U.S. Representative. Let me tell you of how greatly valuable to us were statements of the kind I would like to read by John F. Kennedy back in the early '50s. The overwhelming odds seemed to favor the well-entrenched Communist-controlled union, the largest Communist-controlled union in the history of our country, but statements like this at that time made possible our victories. John F. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, stated this in September 1951:

"The IUE-CIO's record of achievement in benefits gained for its workers is indeed outstanding. It has contributed particularly to our country's welfare by breaking the hold which Communism had on an industry vital to its security."

Upon the shocking news that John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, the officers of the IUE sent the following message to the White House in Washington, D.C., addressed to Mrs. John F. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]:

[-18-]

"The membership and officers of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers AFL-CIO, are heartsick and terribly saddened. We mourn the loss of the President not only as a Head of State but as our friend. John F. Kennedy knew the needs of our nation and the Free World and had the courage and will to lead us. His death is a tragedy for all mankind. Please accept our deepest condolences for yourself and your children.

James B. Carey, President,  
George Collins, Secretary-Treasurer"



[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-13-]

James B. Carey Oral History Transcript  
Name Index

**B**

Brandt, Willy, 8

**C**

Carey, Margaret, 2  
Collins, George, 19

**E**

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 10

**G**

Goldberg, Arthur J., 4, 16  
Green, William R., 7

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 2, 12

**K**

Kennedy, Edward Moore, 3, 4, 11  
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 18  
Kennedy, John Fitzgerald, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,  
10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19  
Kennedy, Robert Francis, 2, 4, 11

**L**

Lewis, John L., 7

**M**

Meany, George, 2

**R**

Roosevelt, Eleanor R., 7  
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 7, 10  
Rovner, Edward, 3

**S**

Schnitzler, William F., 7  
Symington, Symington, II, 1, 2

**T**

Truman, Harry S., 10

**W**

Weaver, George L-P., 3, 4  
Wilson, Woodrow, 9