

Richard J. Murphy Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 12/09/1967
Administrative Information

Creator: Richard J. Murphy
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Biographical Note

Richard J. Murphy (1929-2006) was the Director of Platform Hearings for the Democratic National Committee in 1960, the National Coordinator for the Young Voters for Kennedy Johnson Campaign, and the Assistant Postmaster General from 1961 to 1969. This interview focuses on the workings of the Post Office Department during the Kennedy administration, integration in the Post Office, and legislation concerning the Post Office, among other topics.

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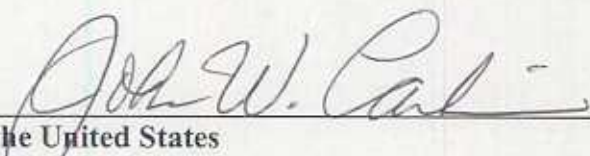
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Richard J. Murphy– JFK #2
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Second Oral History Interview

with

RICHARD MURPHY

December 9, 1967
Washington, DC

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Okay, why don't I just start out by asking you in general what you felt was the overall attitude of the Administration toward the role of unions in the federal government? How was this associated with their attitude towards unions in general?

MURPHY: Well, I think that first of all it's well to remember that in the campaign of 1960, President Kennedy had addressed a message to federal government workers in which he indicated that the federal government's labor policy was, in his judgment, considerably behind the times and that should he be elected President of the United States, that he would take action to look into this matter and to see what could be done about it. So therefore, not too long after his inauguration, of course, he appointed this task force headed by Secretary Goldberg. I think the attitude of the Administration at the White House at that time, and certainly of Mr. Goldberg and most of the members of the task force, was that the federal government was perhaps the last major employer in the country that did not have a labor policy that was in general line with that which the federal government was advocating for private industry and had been advocating for private industry for over thirty years. Therefore, we ought to be doing something to try to give employees in the federal government a greater voice in setting some of the policies which affect the personnel practices and working conditions in the agencies. And that secondly, this would be productive to the agencies in the promotion of efficiency and a better service to the general public. And this was an essential part of the concept of order; that it just wasn't good for the employees, but it also was mutually advantageous for the government itself, for the agencies. And that was the spirit with in which the task force set about its task.

I think the amazing thing about it is that the task force was able to develop a document after much deliberation and after extensive public hearings that was really revolutionary for the federal government and which since has been copied by many state and local agencies throughout the country, not without some growing pains, not without some

difficulties, but it was really a revolutionary document for us in the sense that for the first time it required federal agency managers to recognize unions, employee organizations, and depending upon what vote they had achieved in a bargaining election, to give them appropriate status for either consultation or negotiation. This was a very new philosophy for most federal managers to accept and we had a lot of difficulty initially throughout the government in getting many of the agency heads, or not agency heads so much as installation heads I should say, to really accept this idea.

STEWART: What were the most reasonable of these criticisms of the opposition?

MURPHY: You mean of installation heads?

STEWART: Yes.

MURPHY: To it, to the idea or the unions, you mean to the policy of the government?

STEWART: Of installation heads or management, so to speak.

MURPHY: Well, they first of all had the doctrine that government was sovereign and that government had responsibilities with anyone including representatives of some employees. There was the idea that this was a costly thing for the federal government to engage in, that far from promoting efficiency and economy it was detrimental to service and that huge costs would be involved in running this program. Other objections to it were that we ought not to have to take all this time to deal with employee organizations, that we ought to be able to make decisions quickly, and that unions negotiations take time as they do in the private economy and therefore, they were bad from the point of view of government. These were some of the complaints that you get and as a matter of fact, we still get some of these complaints even today from some of our people. But I think the thing that they resented the most was the fact that many of the decisions which individual installations heads had made heretofore unilaterally would under the philosophy of this Executive Order, require bilateral agreement and negotiations in good faith. And this was very difficult for many of our people to accept, as it was in private industry after the Wagner Act. As you know, many private employers never really got used to the Wagner Act, so that's not unusual. But I think looking back on it after five years that the amazing thing to me today is that it has achieved the wide degree of acceptance that it now has. And we have just concluded, as you know John, a week's public hearing under a second task force which has now been set up by President Johnson, headed by Secretary Wirtz [Willard W. Wirtz]. And in that public hearing, virtually every witness that testified, whether it was from an agency of the government or from the unions themselves, indicated that in their opinion the Executive Order had been beneficial to their operations and to a better dialogue between labor and management and between employees and managers. And this is, I think, quite a testimony to the Order.

STEWART: Did many people, either here in the Post Office or elsewhere have the attitude that you were in effect inviting conflict, in inviting difficulties where none had existed and probably wouldn't exist?

MURPHY: Yes, I think that that was attitude on the part of many installation managers or postmasters. That was not so much a pronounced attitude in this Department as it was perhaps in other government agencies where they had had much less of a tradition of unionization. We had been very highly unionized for many years and we are today over 90 percent unionized. So this was not as pronounced in this agency. I remember that the National Federation of Federal Employees, Vaux Owen, for example, particularly had that point of view. He felt that the Executive Order was based on a theory of conflict and it ought to be based on a theory of cooperation. Well, that isn't exactly right in the sense that a key part of the preamble of the Order said that the purpose of the order is to promote better cooperation between employees and managers but also to recognize that really there are legitimate differences of opinion and interests between employees and managers as there is in the private economy. And many of our government union leaders, accustomed to sort of being in many cases as company union heretofore or accustomed to sort of being an association that really wasn't a union in any way, had a heck of time getting used to the idea that the Executive Order drew a very firm line between management and rank and file. And unions such as Mr. Owen's union for example, were accustomed to having very high level supervisors as their officers at the local so that an installation head was in the most impossible position of dealing with the union and really the union leader may be his principal assistant. And this was ridiculous. Well, the Executive Order pretty well cut that out by insisting that managers had to draw a line between people on the management side of the fence and on the union side of the fence. And some of our unions still are objecting to this today, although there is once again, much less disagreement in our agency than in other agencies about this because we have drawn our line historically between supervision and rank and file long before.

STEWART: Was there much discussion at that time of the whole problem of the right to strike, which has come into the fore in the last year or so?

MURPHY: There was some discussion of it. I won't say that there was a great deal of it. I think there is more discussion of that problem today than there was at that time, although there definitely was discussion of this in the task force. And I think it was the very clear feeling of all of the people on the task force, I never heard any dissent to this within the task force that federal employees should not have the right to strike against the federal government. But it was also very clear that we all felt that reasonable alternatives had to be provided if we were to insist on the "no strike" clause. And of course as you know there is an existing law against striking against the federal government. But I think all the members of the task force felt that this was philosophically right but that it was philosophically wrong to just say you can't strike but not to provide alternatives, reasonable alternatives. And that was another reason why I'm sure President Kennedy felt that there had to be something like an Executive Order in the government. And what emerged from that task force report for the very first time gave federal employees a reasonable alternative to strike and a method by which they could adjudicate their differences and talk out their differences and negotiate out their differences with the people that employ them. And in my estimation, it's worked out pretty well. Of course, I think all members of the task force also

recognized that on the really gut issues on which strikes occur in the private economy, namely wages and hours, that we already had in some sense a third party means of settling this--through the Congress. The Congress is the arbiter of these questions and very frankly the employee organizations make out extremely well with the congress. They know this and that is why they are extremely reluctant to give up the idea of dealing with the Congress on wages and hours. Many members of the task force wanted to be able to negotiate wages and hours. And some thought was given to putting this into the Executive Order, but this would have required a change in legislation.

STEWART: Was there a significant problem with the morale or the attitude or the incentive of management people in areas where they were being criticized by unions directly as a result of this new life the unions were given?

MURPHY: You mean after the Order was issued?

STEWART: Yes.

MURPHY: Yes, I'd say that many agency managers felt very much put upon. They felt that they were defenseless against local unions that were organizing, that were sending their members to universities to learn bargaining techniques and what-have-you. And many of the agencies were not conducting very good training programs for their own managers. We did conduct very extensive training programs in the first year for our postmasters. Mr. Day [J. Edward Day] participated personally in going around the country in area meetings and providing training under a team here from our Bureau of Personnel and Operations to our postmasters and to our principal negotiating officials. We had special sessions at the University of Oklahoma run for four weeks for our top postmasters. But then, subsequently to that, we were prohibited by Congress itself from spending any money for the purpose of educating our postmasters and others in the latest techniques of negotiation. But the unions, of course, were spending a great deal of money so their people came well prepared and well trained to the bargain table and some of the people in management side, especially outside the post office, were not well prepared. So this led to a feeling of frustration on the part of many installation managers and cries for greater training, which I feel was completely justified, but also to some feeling on their part that the Executive Order was responsible for all of their difficulties when really I don't think that was the case at all. Also, many of our managers had heretofore participated in rank and file unions, either as officers generally dominating the unions in some cases or in their own unions where they were accustomed to sort of act like a labor union in regard to higher levels of management. They felt pretty upset because the Executive Order no longer enabled them to bargain with management or to deal with management as a rank and file group. It forced them to become managers. And this was a very painful process for many of them. Our supervisory organization in particular, felt that they were being denied exclusive recognition which was being given to rank and file and therefore, their status was being downgraded. They couldn't negotiate with the postmaster themselves, and they were expected to discipline and supervise the rank and file employees who are members and they felt sort of caught in between.

STEWART: To what extent, if at all, was there a problem with the association between high level people in the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization] and political people in the White House or in the Democratic National Committee or somewhere?

MURPHY: Yes. I think that there is no question that there was a very close relationship between Mr. Meany [George Meany] and some of the top people at the AFL-CIO and people on the White House staff, the President himself, and members of the task force. Mr. Goldberg, as you recall, used to be a prominent counsel for one of the largest unions before he was named as Secretary of Labor. But I think that Secretary Goldberg, as the other people on the task force, exercised a remarkable degree of objectivity in their dealings. Many of the stands which he took as Secretary of Labor in that task force I'm sure you would not have expected of a man that had been a former high official of a labor organization. I thought his judgment was remarkably objective.

It is true that the thrust of our Executive Order was certainly pro-labor in the sense that it was an enlargement of the right of organized labor in the federal government. But I think it was very minimal in terms of what was being done in the private sector of the economy. And I think in terms of being required or being dictated by the AFL or CIO or anything of that sort, such as I've occasionally heard charges, this is completely false and ridiculous. The people on the task force represented management, career civil service. Mr. Macy was a member of the task force, Mr. Goldberg came from a labor background, Mr. Day was the vice president of one of the largest corporations in America, Mr. McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] was the president of Ford Motor Company. And yet there was unanimity of viewpoint among these members and there was not a dissenting report issued. And that's, I think, a remarkable testimonial to the fact that it was an objective Order and it was, in my estimation, long overdue.

STEWART: Then there was certainly no interference or no pressure of any type from the political people in the White House?

MURPHY: No. We had absolutely, absolutely none along this line. The task force proceeded to do its work I think, in an objective fashion, held many public hearings, heard from all sides, heard from employers as well as rank and file, heard from experts in this field and to my knowledge, as an alternate member of the committee, there was never any political intervention from the White House at all. I don't think any of us required the.... Mr. Goldberg made his report to the President, and the President accepted it in total.

STEWART: Okay, unless there is anything else on the unions or the Executive Order?

MURPHY: No. I'd just comment that now President Johnson, just a few months ago, appointed a second task force this time headed by Secretary Wirtz but reflecting substantially the same positions of the people that served on the

original Goldberg task force for the purpose of reviewing the work of this task force. And we've now held public hearings, we are now in the process of holding sessions of the alternates, and we will be making a recommendation to the President around the first part of next year. But the thing that's already clear to me is that practically no major sections of the Kennedy Executive Order are going to be changed, in the sense of rescinding them. What is going to be done, the general thrust of it, will be in the area of further expanding and strengthening what was done originally. And this is the remarkable thing to me.

STEWART: Let me ask you, in general, for your account of all the problems between Postmaster Day and Deputy Postmaster Brawley [H. W. Brawley].

MURPHY: Well, there...

STEWART: Bearing in mind, of course, that you can close this tape and transcript for as long as you want and I think it's important because of course it was probably the only serious problem on the Cabinet level that occurred during the Kennedy Administration of a Cabinet member, one threatening to resign, and two, actually moving out. And so I think as much as we can get on it and certainly from someone like you, it would be valuable.

MURPHY: Good. I would think that this portion of the interview I would want to have withheld at least for a while from public use. And I'll tell you as much as I know about it quite honestly.

The difficulties between Mr. Day and Mr. Brawley were evident from the very start. First of all, they were both appointed on the same day, they were announced at the same time, which was a most unusual type of announcement for a Cabinet officer. And I think that this, the fact that they were both announced simultaneously by the President gave Mr. Brawley the idea that he sort of shared co-equal power with Mr. Day. Mr. Day I think in retrospect, probably rankled about this from the very beginning, although he never said anything to me about it nor indicated any displeasure with me whatsoever about it. But in retrospect, I think that was the case. Secondly, Mr. Day felt that Mr. Brawley was engaging in a number of activities which he felt were not proper for a Deputy to engage in without informing the Postmaster General. He felt that he was not being kept adequately informed and he felt that there was much too much dealing directly between members of the White House staff and Mr. Brawley without Mr. Day's being aware of it. This seemed to be the essence or the crux of the difficulty.

Also, it was somewhat of a problem for some of the people here in the Department, bureau heads such as myself, in the sense that it became apparent after a while that there was certainly a lack of communication on certain things between Ed and Bill. And therefore, I had to make very much of a point and a policy, as did the other bureau heads, to see to it that everything I told Mr. Brawley I also told Mr. Day and vice versa, to try to keep them fully informed. Sometimes it required double work.

Mr. Day I think, became quite unhappy about the situation and after several months in 1961, I believe he went to the White House and talked to some of the staff officials, I think Ralph Dungan and one or two others he mentioned it to confidentially that he wasn't happy

about Bill and urging that something be done about this. At least, so he later told me. I knew nothing of it at the time it happened. Well, several months went by evidently and nothing was done and then evidently Mr. Day told me he went again to discuss this matter and nothing was done so that finally after a series of things had occurred which evidently upset Mr. Day, not being informed of certain things evidently when he was away that went on and so forth and so on, he suddenly submitted his resignation to the President.

STEWART: Let me just ask you were these things, looking back on it now, of a fairly minor nature? Was it an accumulation of a lot of small things or were there some significant....

MURPHY: It is difficult, John, for me to answer it because I was not aware of many of the details at the time it was going on. I'm still not aware of many of what the point of view of differences were. I do know that Mr. Day subsequently told me that he felt that he had warned the White House on several occasions that he just felt he could not operate the Department with Mr. Brawley as his Deputy and that it had just gotten to the point where he was just decided to leave. That was it. If they weren't going to do anything about it, he was going to leave. And so he submitted his resignation quite suddenly. I think he called Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] the night before and asked for an appointment with the President the next morning and evidently it didn't work out or something along this line and therefore he just dispatched his letter.

And the next thing I knew about it was when I arrived at the office that morning and I was told to come immediately to the General's office. When I got there, he had assembled there the rest of the top staff and he announced to us that he had resigned and that it was irrevocable and that he was very sorry that he couldn't give us advance notice about it. So he thanked every member of the staff and said that he hoped that nobody would talk to him about doing anything different because it was final and that was it. And it was a great shock on all of our parts obviously and I might say, great sadness at Mr. Day's impending departure because he was well liked by the staff and they thought he was a highly intelligent man and devoted to his task and was doing very good and interesting things here in the Department.

So I recall that there was a tremendous flurry of telephone calls coming forth at that time that he kept being interrupted by and I recall that Attorney General Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] called while we were assembled in Mr. Day's office and asked to come over and see him. And Mr. Day, I remember him saying to Bob on the phone, "Fine," he'd sure be happy to see him at any time, et cetera, but that if he was coming over to change his mind, it just couldn't be done. And that was it. And then when he put down the phone, he indicated to the staff that the reason he felt that way, he didn't want to appear to be unreasonable, et cetera but that he felt he could not be in a position whereby anyone could interpret what he was doing as a threat to the President, that he would either resign or Brawley would go, et cetera. He said, "I've decided I'm going and that's it, period." Well, the staff took an unprecedented action. The staff met on its own and indicated unanimously, the career people and the political appointees in the top staff, indicated that we should communicate to Bob when he arrived the fact that we wanted Mr. Day to stay very much and that as far as we were concerned Bob could tell him that the staff was resigning with him. And so that was communicated to Bob when he arrived. Mike Monroney met him

downstairs and brought him up and the entire staff was assembled in Mike's office, the top staff, to explain our great concern about the General's departure, et cetera, and indicated that if it would be helpful to Bob he could tell him that the entire staff was going with him. Well....

STEWART: What was his reaction to that?

MURPHY: Bob's reaction?

STEWART: Yes.

MURPHY: Bob said he would tell him, he would so tell him, he would use the information as he felt would be necessary and that he going in to talk with him and try to talk him out of it and that he would use the information as he would need it. Well, Bob was in there for quite a while and when he emerged, we were then called to the General's office et cetera and the General said, "Well, I did what I said I was not going to do. That is, I have rescinded my resignation." And he said, "I feel badly about that in many ways because the thing that is furthest from my mind is that I just do not want anyone to believe that I was threatening the President. But," he said, "I just decided to leave. I just could not take it any longer." And so that was that. Well, we were very relieved that Mr. Day was going to stay. At the same time many of us felt very strongly that Mr. Brawley was a good guy and that we were also happy to hear that he was going to be going to the National Committee, which he did and evidently the agreement was worked out that he would go forthwith to the National Committee. And I don't think that Mr. Day and Mr. Brawley have ever spoken since that time.

It was a very rugged situation for the people here in headquarters and many of the points over which there was disagreement I'm sure, none of us really know even to this day. And Mr. Day had not talked to me about it a great deal nor has Mr. Brawley. Although, I did talk with both of them of course, especially on the day when this happened and I have some understanding of what some of the differences in point of view were. Bill, from Mr. Brawley's point of view, felt that he was doing what certain people in the White House staff wanted him to do and that he had the authority to go ahead and do this. And I can understand the position that he was in. So that I think the whole thing was terribly unfortunate from the point of view of both the men involved. It became a very bitter source of conflict and disagreement and it was unfortunate for the Department and for the President. I think both men made substantial contributions to the Post Office while they were here.

STEWART: Well, Day stayed on what another year?

MURPHY: Yes. Mr. Day continued on and the person that he was reporting to at the White House, I mean that he dealt with on liaison matters at the White House was changed I think then to Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue]. And Dick became the principal contact point. And I think that at the time Mr. Day had indicated that he didn't along with one or two fellows at the White House staff and he indicated that to Bob. And so Bob worked it out that Dick would become the guy that he would deal with.

Mr. Day stayed on for at least another year and during that time, Fred Belen [Frederick C. Belen] was appointed as acting Deputy. Now there was a long interim I think, there for a while before Fred was appointed as acting Deputy and it was Mr. Day's desire to appoint Fred as the full Deputy. But he could evidently not get that through and subsequently about almost a year later or so a Mr. Bishop [Sidney W. Bishop] was appointed as Deputy. Although Sid had been a personal assistant to Mr. Day when he was in Prudential and Mr. Day had appointed him as Assistant PMG. Well President Kennedy had Mr. Day's recommendation, I gather the impression, although Mr. Day never talked to me about this at great length, that Mr. Day's recommendation was still Mr. Belen and that he had not recommended Mr. Bishop. When Mr. Bishop was appointed I think he was very much surprised and this was, I think it was shortly after that Mr. Day decided that he would resign. So I don't think that the difficulty that was brought about by the Day-Brawley clash was ever fully resolved and some of the ill feelings between certain members of the White House staff and Mr. Day sort of lingered on and I think that that finally was probably the principal reason that he left in 1963. But as I say, I don't know many of the details I don't know many of the private conversations that took place. It was just a very unhappy incident for all of us because I know the top staff had an enormous regard for Mr. Day and that we all felt that both Mr. Day and Mr. Brawley had made significant contributions to the Department.

STEWART: As far as your own bureau is concerned, your own work, do you think these problems had any real impact or was it a matter of having day to day hurdles to get over?

MURPHY: Well, I think it was more difficult in terms of reporting and keeping both of the top officials informed. I don't think in terms of... [Phone rings] Excuse me for a second. [Tape turned off].

STEWART: About problems resulting from these differences.

MURPHY: Occasionally we would also get a little difference in directives from Bill or from Ed, and this would pose a problem of having to work it out. But by and large, it certainly was something that we could live with; it wasn't something that was impossible for us and I think in spite of this difficulty the record shows that the Department made remarkable progress during that first year and a half. And my personal view is that Mr. Day will go down in history as one of the most outstanding Postmaster Generals. And I think the period in the Post Office under the Kennedy Administration will be very favorably recorded by historians. Certainly when you compare the record to previous Postmaster Generals, I think that's the case. I think we've had, we've been very privileged to have three hell of a good ones recently. Of course, I think O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] will probably go down as the greatest, in my estimation, in terms of what he'd done for, first of all, the image of the Postal Service, secondly the idea of getting people to think about it seriously as to whether or not it ought to be a public corporation and third his reforms on the Postal Service Institute and the general service improvements that he's made. But conflicts like that I think are inevitable in any administration and especially when as I say the two principals were appointed the way they were appointed initially. I don't know in

hindsight though whether or not personality-wise it could have ever been resolved. I just think Mr. Day and Mr. Brawley were two different personalities coming from completely two different backgrounds. Mr. Brawley was accustomed to dealing on the Hill and to dealing in a highly political atmosphere. Mr. Day was accustomed to a business background in big business, although he had political experience under Governor Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] in Illinois. And consequently they just had different personalities.

STEWART: He was a total unknown as far as the White House, people at the White House were concerned.

MURPHY: Right. He was completely unknown I think, certainly as far as the general public was concerned. Mr. Day always used to joke about that, that he was the least known member of the Cabinet. And that certainly was true, I think that's the case. It turned out when he came to Washington that he had a remarkable wit. I think he was one of the funniest men that was ever in Washington. And he's, as you know, written a couple of books since that time which are really hilarious to read.

STEWART: Were many career people forced into this or forced to take sides more or less?

MURPHY: Well, we had some career official in the top staff that headed offices or bureaus that obviously had the same difficulty as I had in terms of operation. They did take a position on the question of resignation when it came down to either fish or cut bait and the resignation of the top staff was unanimous on that day of all people present. I think one or two were not present at the time, but of all the people in Washington it was unanimous. And that included the General Counsel of the Department, the Chief Inspector of the Department, and other people that were career officials as well as political appointees.

STEWART: Okay, unless there's anything else on that, I wanted to ask you one more question about this merit promotion plan. You had mentioned this in the last interview. Did you have the complete backing of the White House on this? Or was it an accomplished thing before anyone fully realized the importance of it?

MURPHY: I think that I could not answer as to who had the complete backing of the White House. My view was that the White House was not informed of this until after it was placed into effect. It was placed into effect by a directive from Mr. Day, actually by an okay from Mr. Brawley. And I had a directive from Mr. Brawley, oh, a couple of months after we were in office, a couple of weeks after we were in office, really to draw up a merit promotion plan for the Department, that we had none and that we were being descended upon by everybody in creation. All of them had horrible tales about what had happened to them under the preceding administration. It seemed that nothing good had ever happened to them according to the stories. They were all being denied justified advancement merely because they were Democrats or happened to have been for Jack Kennedy. In my hindsight, some of the people that said they were for Jack Kennedy, if

they were all for Jack Kennedy, Jack should have won by at least a ten million vote margin. But any administration gets this at a change in office.

Consequently, Mr. Brawley had directed that a merit promotion plan should be drawn up in order to give us some standard by which we could fend off all these people that were descending on us. Mr. Day was strongly in favor of a merit principle and so indicated at the staff meeting and concurred fully in the proposal to draw up such a plan. I did draw up such a plan with the gull consultation of the postal unions as well as members of our staff. It was cleared with the various bureaus of the Department and presented to Mr. Brawley, who directed that it be put into action and it was approved by Mr. Day. Now whether or not they ever cleared it beyond that at the White House, I don't know. But I do know that when it did go into effect and was announced by Mr. Brawley, Mr. Brawley announced it by having it announced to our regional directors who were meeting here in a conference and he personally directed that the press should be called in the federal columnists, et cetera, and he made the announcement to the press that this would be our policy henceforth. Well, this got wide coverage in the press and I do know that after that all hell broke loose. Congressional calls left and right; I was threatened by a senior member of Congress with removal, many intemperate calls were made of political leaders, many attempts were made to go to members of the White House staff to have us overruled. I was directed by both Mr. Brawley and Mr. Day to stand firm on it. And actually it turns out now that there's practically no controversy about it. It's accepted as a way of life in the Post Office and most people that know anything about the greatest things that ever happened to this service. And where we get the criticism today is that the plan hasn't been extended far enough or covers enough positions. And this is a perennial complaint and of course extensions are being made all of the time. And the significant thing is that in the Postmaster Generals that have succeeded Mr. Day along this line of course not only have not changed the plan, but have extended the plan in each case.

STEWART: Were there many removals of postmasters or doesn't this come under your bureau?

MURPHY: It would not come directly under my bureau. It would come under the Bureau of Operations. However, I'm aware of the general situation and the answer is overwhelmingly no, that Mr. Day took an extremely firm stand on the question of removal. And this was important because there had only really been one other change of administration since postmasters had been put under civil service in 1938, fully under civil service, and that was when Mr. Summerfield [Arthur E. Summerfield] became Postmaster General in '53. There was at that time a tremendous drive put on by the Republicans to remove many Democratic postmasters. Of course, practically every postmaster in the country was a Democrat then and the Republicans had a considerable problem on their hands. They were getting tremendous pressure from political leaders to get the Democrats out and put the Republicans in. They made several attempts to remove postmasters and some were actually removed. But they lost a number of important cases and after these cases were lost the thing died away. And I think the principle was finally accepted that postmasters were in fact under civil service. So this was the first test the other way in 1961 and it stood up very well. I forget the total number of postmasters that were removed in the first three years, but it was an extremely small number and if my recollection

serves me correctly, there were almost an identical number of Democrats removed as well as Republicans. So no one could possibly say that it was a partisan removal. Of course, each year you always have some postmaster you have to remove for incompetence in office or what-have-you. But I can state authoritatively and firmly that there was no political attempt to get rid of Republican postmasters either made or permitted by the Kennedy-Day Administration.

STEWART: Okay. Can we move over the Equal Employment? Could you describe your relationship with the President's Committee on Equal Employment in the early stages of the organization? Let me ask you more specifically, were you at all involved in the setting up of the President's Committee?

MURPHY: No, I was involved in the sub-Cabinet group on civil rights which I was a member of from the first, from the start. And this was a group of people that met really informally under the call of either Harris Wofford [Harris L.

Woffard] or Lee White or other appropriate White House officials that happened to be functioning on civil rights. It was primarily Harris or Lee and included people from the Civil Rights Commission, people from the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, and people at the Assistant Secretary level of the various agencies that were the principal equal employment officers of the agencies. And this group met periodically and I think served a useful purpose of exchanging information about what was going on in the government and what the problems were that we were confronted with of an equal employment nature and served as a clearing house for a lot of good ideas and new approaches. I really feel that this was one of the most productive parts of the whole Kennedy Administration, what was done administratively in the civil rights area before legislation was attempted. And this is something that really hasn't been adequately chronicled because fantastic things were done within each agency administratively under the deflection of people on the White House staff and those in the Administration that were concerned with Equal Employment Opportunity to eliminate many, many barriers that had existed for many decades and which produced more progress than any legislation could possibly have produced at the time. And certainly the whole climate for legislation in '61 on civil rights in the Congress and all was not really too advantageous so that the Kennedy Administration's strategy was to do everything possible, first administratively that we could, and then to take on the legislative battle.

Here in this Department for example, I first came here in '61, February of '61, there were segregated employee organizations. I gave one of our managerial employee organizations, a supervisor organization, ten days in my home town of Baltimore in which to desegregate their locals, they had dual locals. Abolish the dual locals or else I would cancel their recognition. It so happened to be the head of the supervisor organization in that city, the white section. So it was a painful decision for me but I will say, I will tell you within four days I think I received a letter saying they were integrated. This word got around very quickly among a number of employee organizations and pretty soon we saw some of our unions taking action on their own because they knew that they were going to lose recognition and status if they didn't. This was later incorporated into an Executive Order by President Kennedy several months after that directing that hence forth any organization that seeks

recognition or is given recognition in the federal government would have to be on an integrated basis. And so, therefore, effectively we ended segregation in this Department in employee organizations. We had it in employee welfare associations and employee recreation organizations.

We eliminated that by administrative direction and a heck of a lot of opposition, especially from certain employee groups in the South and what-have-you, predicting all sorts of dire results, none of which came about. We had in this Department many contract stations over ten thousand contract stations I think, some of whom were with contractors that discriminated in their services to the general public. Lunch counters, for example, restaurants that had contract situation in a Postal service had always been provided on an equal basis to all patrons but many other services had not. We eliminated that. We refused to renegotiate contracts with contractors that provided any services to the general public on a discriminatory basis, not just postal.

We had a terrific situation in terms of grade levels of employees here and this is still a tough problem for us today. But in 1961, when I first came here in this headquarters building, headquarters of our Department, I think there were a total of three Negroes that were higher than Grade 11 in the headquarters. In the regional office I think we had less than a dozen, I mean less than half a dozen officials that were Grade 11 or higher. That began to change very dramatically under President Kennedy and Mr. Day and continued strongly under Dr. Gronouski [John A. Gronouski], President Kennedy's appointee and then of course, greatly accelerated under Mr. O'Brien so that today we have, instead of having I think four officials or three officials that were Grade 11 or higher here in the Department as in '61, we have over fifty-one. And they go all the way up to GS-18. The highest Negro in 1961 I think was a GS-14. We had several fifteens, sixteens, and now an eighteen. Mr. Day, with White House approval, appointed Chris Scott [Christopher C. Scott] as Deputy Assistant Postmaster General, GS-18, which was the highest position up to that time ever attained by a Negro in the postal service. Mr. Scott had subsequently retired now, reached retirement age and retired, an extremely good guy. In the regional offices today we have forty-eight officials that are Grade 11 or higher and as I say we had less than six in 1961. In the field, we had practically no Negro postmasters except postmasters of one man offices, fourth class offices. We had a handful of those. Today we have fifty-one Negro postmasters, twenty-nine of which have been appointed by either President Kennedy or President Johnson. President Kennedy became the first President to appoint a postmaster of a major first class office. We had only one Negro postmaster of a first class office before that and he was appointed by President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] in Vaxhall, New Jersey. Postmaster Kears [Robert F. Kears], he's still in the service. But Mr. Shaw [Leslie N. Shaw] became the acting postmaster of Los Angeles under President Kennedy. And that's the third largest post office in the United States, employing over eleven thousand people. Since that time we now have Negro postmaster in New York and Chicago...

BEGIN SIDE II OF TAPE II

...post offices in the United States today are headed by Negro postmasters. There were a total, I think, less than fifty-four employees in the postal service worked under Negro Postmasters in 1961. Today over 84,000 employees of the postal service work in postal

offices under Negro postmaster. That's a very dramatic change. And there are a whole series of other things that we did to eliminate segregation and discrimination. Mr. Day personally called Washington postmasters of key Southern communities during the difficulties in 1963 for personal conferences with him solely on the question of equal employment opportunity and what the postmaster ought to be doing to set and an example in his community, to try to hold down racial tensions and to try to improve the employment situation and to try to serve as a leavening and a balancing influence in the community as a responsible federal leader reflecting the President's policy in equal employment opportunity. This was unprecedented up to that time to have installation managers called in by a Cabinet officer for this purpose. And some people objected but by and large the postmaster did a very good job along this line serving as a force for moderation and leadership and some of our postmasters served as chairmen of community committees, interracial committees, trying to promote greater understanding between the races. One postmaster in particular in Cambridge, Maryland, our postmaster Ed Walter, who just died a few weeks ago, did an outstanding job along this line. So that once again, we were utilizing the full force of the federal government and the full force of the Post Office on the side of equal employment opportunity and civil rights. And this had never been done before. There was a total commitment on the part of the Department and the top officials to this. But an enormous amount was accomplished and this was before President Kennedy sent the civil rights legislation forward in 1963.

STEWART: To what extent did the President's Committee assist you in all of this or were involved in all of this?

MURPHY: The President's Committee of course is the final authority on the questions of equal employment opportunity in the federal government. They would constantly serve as encouragement to the agencies and prodders to the agencies to move on to greater progress. They constantly attempted to try to bring areas of weakness to our attention for positive action, affirmative programs, and of course, they passed on all cases of complaint that came in and were adjudicated by the Department and were subject to post-audit by the President's Committee, in some cases reversal and in some cases they would ask for additional action to be taken if they felt that not strong enough actions were taken. Then Vice President Johnson, in my estimation, provided outstanding leadership for that Committee at that time. And I can tell you that personally he was involved in this activity not only by attending meetings at which he personally presided on such matters, but on at least two occasions I can recall I was on the receiving end of telephone calls from the Vice President, who as you know is quite a man with a telephone, specifically about cases of equal employment opportunity and to urge postmasters to take more affirmative action to improve the overall situation so that he got very much involved in this thing and I think provided excellent leadership.

STEWART: There were a lot of problems with that Committee and a lot of criticism of it that was strictly a showpiece and there were some internal problems. John Feild left and Hobart Taylor took over. Did this have any impact as far as their assistance to you or as far as their relations with you?

MURPHY: No I could not say that it had any measurable impact on our agency. There were internal problems. I know that there was a problem and there were personality problems involved. But in so far as affecting our operation was concerned, this was not the case. The committee was not a showpiece. The Committee certainly was active as far as this agency was concerned and I'm sure that was the feeling in other agencies. But each agency is primarily responsible for its own affirmative action program. And the President's Committee can't run the program itself. All it can do is prod, cajole, try to overrule in certain cases within its authority and it certainly was active in doing that. But the agencies themselves have to be responsible for developing their own affirmative action program. And I will say that it received strong support in this Department from Mr. Day. He was firmly committed to it and he knew full well....I think compared to any PMG up to that time, he certainly made tremendous progress. As I say, we've gone beyond that even further now under Dr. Gronouski and especially under Mr. O'Brien.

STEWART: I seem to recall someone mentioning a fellow in the Post Office who probably worked for you who had immediate responsibility for this area who died?

MURPHY: Yes. Elmer Paul Brock was my Deputy here and he was a very dedicated and firmly committed official who had come to the Department really from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Delaware, where he had been very heavily engaged in group relations work and was a person that was thoroughly committed personally in every other way, shape, and form to racial equality. I had personally known Elmer Paul for many years. We had served as officers together of the National Students Association many years before. We knew each other very closely and we worked together very closely. He was a very close, deep personal friend as well as my Deputy. And he died very tragically of cancer in 1961, I guess '63. Elmer Paul as my Deputy, I was the equal employment officer for the Department and as my Deputy, of course he carried out a lot of the directives along this line and helped to shape a lot of the policy and did an outstanding job in this Department in my estimation. A lot of the progress that was made in the early years can really be attributed to Elmer Paul. And I think the Negro employees and minority group employees of all kinds knew that Elmer was very much dedicated along this line and he had good standing, I think among the other people in the rest of the Administration that were dealing in this area. And he was a guy that cut red tape pretty much and he didn't give much a damn whose toes he stepped on. Sometimes his methods were a little hard on some of the people involved but he made terrific progress and I think he established a wonderful record.

STEWART: Did you have many contacts with civil rights organizations?

MURPHY: Yes, I had a good deal of contact with them and we have made it an essential part of our equal employment program in this Department, our positive action program, that all of our postmasters and our field managers should make it a point to establish affirmative contacts with community groups and to explain to them what we are attempting to do in the Post Office Department, that we are fully an equal

employment employer, equal opportunity employer, and to keep them apprised of the progress that we are making from time to time. In this business the principal problem we have is a lack of understanding on the part of many minority groups, the minority community, first of all, what is possible within the existing civil service regulations and our hiring regulations and our requirements for our jobs and two, how fast this is possible and what can be done and of the need for additional training and how do we go about the training and what are the restrictions that are placed upon agencies by the Congress itself insofar as funding training is concerned. And generally after you've had to explain these things et cetera we find in most cases there is acceptance. But initially a lot of the criticisms that are leveled at agencies, et cetera, comes about because of a lack of understanding of the federal procedures, plus the fact that minority groups know that in the past the federal government did discriminate in many, many ways. I think the discrimination was disgraceful personally, and we set about under President Kennedy's direction to do every damn thing we possibly could to eliminate it. But it's a constant job; you've got to keep working at it all the time. And you get people from various backgrounds, they all have different attitudes and they have got to be educated into it. And then you've got to have a follow-up program. So it's a constant task.

STEWART: Let me just ask you a few questions about pay and that pretty much covers it I think. In 1961, President Kennedy vetoed a bill providing earlier and larger longevity increase for postal workers. Was this primarily because of the more sweeping legislation that was going to come up in 1962? Do you recall?

MURPHY: Yes, this was one of the factors that we had in mind. We were confronted almost immediately after coming into office with having to testify on this bill, which in effect, was a test bill. Really it was a test that was purposefully put forward by the letter carriers in order to test out the climate of the new Administration and to see how President Kennedy was going to react. I had the unhappy task of having to go testify on that bill within a few weeks after I had been appointed to the Post Office. Of course I came as I indicated from a background knowing absolutely nothing about the Post Office and I was immediately thrown before a congressional committee very shortly thereafter and had to be put in the position of opposing our employee unions that are extremely powerful in Congress on an issue that was of interest to them, importance.

Well, I think we were able to survive it pretty well. We decided that we were in the process of working out an overall rational pay policy for the government and to just try to go along with this kind of an increase in longevities when really it didn't fit into the overall system, would have been counter productive. The bill itself would not be justified on its merits although I certainly was personally very sympathetic to the question of trying to provide increased salary recognition to the extent that this bill did. I felt a sympathy for it. But it chose the wrong means to go about it and therefore, it was decided that we would oppose the bill and the President would have to veto the bill eventually but with the understanding that there would be a comprehensive proposal coming forth from the Administration in 1962. It so happened that such a proposal did come forth and it turned out to be perhaps the greatest single piece of salary reform legislation that Congress ever passed, firmly established the doctrine of pay comparability. And it is extremely heartening that just

yesterday we cleared the conference report in the Congress that will make good on that pledge that was initiated by President Kennedy in 1962 and by Congress in their passage of the salary comparability law and that we are now going to make good on it. President Johnson, I'm sure will sign the law next week, the Salary Act of 1967, which will bring all federal salaries through GS-15 to full comparability by July 1st of 1969. And that has been a tremendous struggle and one of the great accomplishments I think of the Kennedy administration in the area of governmental employee relations. And of course, President Johnson has fulfilled that commitment now.

STEWART: Is comparability as it is spelled out in the 1962 act a meaningful thing as far as postal employees are concerned?

MURPHY: Well, it's extremely meaningful in the sense that it has resulted in an increase within the past five years in postal employee salary of over 25 percent on the average. Some have gotten more than that on the average 25 percent. After this bill is fully effective in July of 1969, when full comparability is achieved, many of our employees will have had a salary increase of almost 40 percent since 1962, so that it's been extremely meaningful for them. If you mean it is the doctrine of comparing letter carrier jobs with something in private industry meaningful, the answer is that it is an artificial relationship and has to be because there is no exact equivalent of a letter carrier job in private industry. We can approximate it, we can come close to it, but we can't get exactly the same job and same measurement. There are private parcel firms. There's Railway Express, there's United Parcel, there are local parcel companies and things of that sort that you can make some approximation on, but you can't get an exact comparison on the postal distribution clerk the same way. So that therefore, we decided in 1962, to link the letter carriers job with a GS-5 rating which is the college entrance rating in the federal government and which is a rating in which you have some junior accountants and other types of this sort plus senior clerical employees.

This linkage has subsequently become a source of a lot of controversy between the unions and management, as it has been in Great Britain and as it is in other postal systems in the world. This argument goes on everywhere. But it has rebounded to a great benefit for the postal employee in spite of the complaints of unions. And we've just been through in this session of the Congress another thorough rehashing of this linkage and the Congress has declined to take any action to over ride it in this session. And I suspect that they are going to maintain that linkage pretty much into the future. But the idea of getting the linkage initially and the idea of equating federal salaries with levels of work, with comparable levels of work performed in private industry was a monumental accomplishment. And it is really the only rational basis for salary setting in my judgment. We in the federal government should not be paying more than is necessary to get the job done but by the same token we certainly should not pay less to our people merely because they're federal employees and are paid for comparable levels of skill in private industry.

One of the unfortunate aspects of the salary system as it still remains today in spite of the tremendous improvements that have been made since President Kennedy's time and right down to the very day today and President Johnson has extended this incidentally there have been annual wage increases every year since pay comparability was adopted. There has been

a pay bill every year except once since that time. The only reason that didn't occur was of course the assassination in 1963. So that there has been a tremendous amount of improvement overall in the government's competitive position being able to attract people, employees. But the greatest weakness today in the system is still that the government pays a national rate rather than paying a locality adjustment. They're practically the only large employer I know of anywhere that pays a national rate which means that a letter carrier in Jackson, Tennessee starts at \$5,331 I think it is a year, and in New York he starts at \$5,331. this is absurd because the entire living cost in New York city compared to Jackson, Tennessee is vastly different. The standards of living are vastly different and the going rates paid to people that work, for example, in parcel services in Jackson, Tennessee and in New York are tremendously different. So that it doesn't make any sense to continue to pay just a national rate. But we have a big battle in Congress and a big battle with our unions to try to get away from that. But I'm convinced that that has to be the next big reform item.

STEWART: Was there ever any effort or any discussion of separating the Post Office and civil service areas in Congress? This has always.... This has frequently been discussed when people talk about congressional reform. Was it ever....

MURPHY: You mean taking the Post Office and withdrawing it from the general civil service?

STEWART: The committees in Congress. No, I'm taking about separating the committees, the House Committees in Congress.

MURPHY: Oh, you mean dividing them into two different committees, one for Post Office and one for Civil Service? There was not a great deal of discussion, no. I mean a few people would discuss it but there was not any real serious discussion that I can recall during that time about that. The real issue that was discussed was whether or not postal workers ought to be under the same rules and regulations as the rest of federal employees. And especially there was a lot of discussion about that because of the way the salary is set. In the salary setting procedure the people that really count in the Congress are the postal unions. Congress really isn't much interested in what in the world the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State is paid or what they pay people in GSA [General Services Administration.] He's interested in what does the letter carrier make. And all the political pressure that is brought to bear, now I should say all, I'll say 90 percent of the political pressure that's brought to bear on the Congress is brought to bear by the postal employee unions and their ladies auxiliaries and the campaign contributions which they have. And all of which is quite legal. There was considerable discussion as to whether or not, because of the tremendous absorption and concentration on postal pay, whether or not it was wise to continue to have the pay of postal workers set by the Congress or whether or not they should be set in a different way and the Congress concentrate on the rest of the Civil Service for salary setting. But nothing was ever really done about that. Now as you know, Mr. O'Brien subsequently proposed that a postal corporation be established, a public corporation and that the employees be put under a separate merit system and that the corporation have the power to negotiate for the settling of wages. Quite possibly this could be subject also to

some form of third party mediation or possibly arbitration in case of non-agreement. But that has been the most concrete discussion that has been obtained so far on whether or not there should be a separate treatment of postal workers as opposed to the problems of other federal workers on behalf of the Congress.

STEWART: One short thing. Manpower utilization became a fairly important thing during the three years of the Kennedy Administration. Did you run any significant problems with work measurement systems?

MURPHY: Yes, indeed. We certainly did have significant problems. The work measurement system is still an extremely controversial part of the post office operation. And we, at this very day, I'm going to be attending a meeting next week again of the top staff to discuss possible modifications in the work measurement system. I had to appear before Congress on several occasions together with Mr. Belen to testify on the work measurement system. There were innumerable bills introduced in the Congress to prohibit the use of the work measurement system in the postal service and strongly supported by our unions so that we've had a devil of a time in trying to obtain work measurement. We've had a devil of a time in trying to apply work standards throughout the postal service but we are making progress along this line. I personally think that our current work measurement system has several weaknesses in it that need improvement in spite of the improvements that have already been made. And we will be working on those. But you're right in saying that there was ferocious opposition in the Congress to this led by and of course stimulated by the employee organizations. But I think noticeable progress was made in better utilization of manpower under President Kennedy and this has been continuing under President Johnson.

STEWART: There's one final question. A lot, of course, has been written about and to a certain extent a certain myth has been created about the extent to which the style and approach of the Kennedy Administration reached down into departments and agencies in Washington. Do you think generally this was true? Can you think of any areas or specific things where this style and approach of the Administration actually made a real impact on...?

MURPHY: Well, I think it was noticeable in many ways and one way that comes readily to mind is this Department was the accent on youth and on young people. We brought more young people into the postal service starting with President Kennedy and I might say continuing under President Johnson than ever happened before. This was really predominantly an old man's organization and traditions of long service and what-have-you. And to have the young people, especially in the upper echelons of the Department was a very unheard of thing. This was very marked and pronounced under President Johnson. I think also in terms of the way that things were done and in terms of the expansion of viewpoint and the interest which the Department showed in things that were purely beyond their immediate concern. For example, it would have been unthinkable a decade ago for the Post Office Department to be seriously concerned about equal employment opportunity or for an agency head to call in postmasters and talk about their

community responsibilities on the race issue et cetera. This was a vast change and many people didn't like that. But I happened to think it was the right kind of a change and it put the Post Office Department in its proper context as it did other agencies. It emphasized the responsibility of agencies for the program of the President just beyond their immediate jurisdiction or concern. The number of inter-agency groups that we had on anything ranging from salary setting to civil rights to lord knows what, labor relations, what-have-you. All of these things I think brought about a much greater degree of inter agency cooperation than we've ever had before.

The establishment of the Federal Executive Board which was an innovation of the Kennedy Administration of the heads of agencies in cities throughout the country to function as a team of the federal government rather than as individual agencies was a noticeable step forward along this line. General consolidation of recruitment efforts among various federal agencies had began under President Kennedy. This sort of thing. All these were illustrative of an attitude that you were part of the federal government and not just postal employees or not just Commerce Department or Labor Department employees. And I think this style was very marked. There are just some of the things that come to mind. I'm sure there are many others that.... It was a whole different feeling, I think.

I think you can really best get an answer to this by talking to the career employees that are here. I have career employees in this Department that tell me that they never knew of a time before when the top officials of the Department got as involved in the details of administration and details of the operation and became as knowledgeable about the operation as they did under President Kennedy. And as they are today. And I think that's true. You no longer can be appointed to a job and then just sort of expect to preside over it. People got very much involved and the top officials here know their operation pretty well. And this was the thing I think that marked change in terms of the number of hours of work put in, the burning of the midnight oil, the working on weekends and this was particularly pronounced under President Kennedy and of course President Johnson. But this is a big change in what went on before.

So that I think in terms of a sense of urgency if you will of things that needed to be done on the social agenda, a sense of urgency and a sense of importance that even an agency and an agency that could have a profound affect on the social well-being of our people especially in the minority group areas. It's the largest single employer of minority groups in the world. We employ now over a hundred thousand Negroes, twelve thousand Mexican-Spanish Americans, five thousand Orientals and increasing numbers all the time in our bigger cities. The Post Office Department could become, could have a tremendous impact on public employment policy. This was a new concept and a new feeling. So I think all these things can be attributed to the kind of a start that was made under President Kennedy. I feel very strongly about it.

STEWART: Okay, that's about all I have.

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