

Phillip S. Hughes Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 05/30/68
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Assistant Director for Legislative Reference, Bureau of the Budget (1959-1967). In this interview, Hughes discusses the transition from Dwight D. Eisenhower to John F. Kennedy, how the Bureau of the Budget handled this transition and interactions between the Bureau of the Budget and White House staff, among other issues.

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Phillip S. Hughes– JFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

PHILLIP S. HUGHES

May 30, 1968
Washington, D. C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Mr. Hughes, what types of things would you take to the White House staff other than routine matters after you had gone through the clearance process? What type of problems would you refer to them?

HUGHES: Well, I suppose there would be several categories of problems. First of all, and particularly in the early days of the Kennedy Administration, there would be the question of interpretation of the general guidelines that had been evolved either during the campaign or during the inaugural period and immediately thereafter, but which were so general in their terms that we weren't quite sure what they would mean when they were converted into the specifics of a bill or a statement regarding the bill. These, by and large, would be refinements, and sometimes, particularly as time passed, we would have enough guidance to make our own judgments about them.

On the other hand, part of the Bureau of the Budget's stock in trade is to be right on these matters, and where there was opportunity for some degree of misinterpretation or of latitude in interpretation, we wanted to call it like the President wanted it. So I would, in those circumstances, talk normally with Mike Feldman about it occasionally with others. He sometimes would have the answer. Sometimes he would talk with Ted or with the President or, if need be, with somebody else in the

White House staff. Normally I think his contacts were either with Ted or the President on these kinds of matters.

Well, then another whole category of problems in which we would contact the White House were those problems more or less routine in nature. They represent the ongoing grist of the government mill, not of sufficient importance individually to have been the subject of a particular presidential pronouncement of any sort but collectively of a great deal of importance and matters on which the institutions of government or the bureaucracy, whatever you want to call it, has its own answers more or less ready made, but where we wanted to be sure those answers corresponded to the wishes of the President and his Administration.

I was trying to think of a sample problem as I was talking. Many of these kinds of problems are in the natural resources or the public works area where certain types of programs or projects come up again and again for consideration. The proponents test each administration, in a sense, and the question is really, "Does this new administration want to deal somewhat differently with that problem than the prior one?"

Then a third category of problems that we would go to the White House on were the tactical problems where Larry O'Brien or some of his staff were the fountainheads of wisdom. How do we do this? What should we do with respect to some particular piece of legislation that involved in one way or another an important member of the leadership, perhaps, a member of a key committee, perhaps, majority or minority, as the case may be?

HACKMAN: This is you going to them or them coming to you?

HUGHES: I would. . . . Both ways. But I was talking in the context of my going to them. We have a particular project which involves a state or an area, for example, where some important person in the Congress is involved, and we're about to say yes or no, as the case may be, and this is a matter in which the President does have an interest. It may also, in a different set of circumstances, be simply what's the timing of our response to a particular congressional inquiry? How do you want to relate this to other things going on at the same time?

HACKMAN: What about when you were going through the clearance process on pieces of legislation that were originating in the departments when differences in views among various departments would come up? At what point would you take these things and how frequently would you take these things to Sorensen or Feldman to get involved in?

HUGHES: Well, if the problem was simply disagreement and we were pretty confident of the position desired, we wouldn't go to Feldman or Sorensen except to "bite the agencies with the President's teeth." If the doctrine's clear, we normally can speak with enough of a presidential voice to make it come out like the President wants it. In some circumstances you can't, and in those circumstances we'd go over there. If there was a strong inter-agency disagreement, even on a relatively routine piece of business perhaps, but where the presidential position was unclear or perhaps even in conflict with one or the other of the aspects of the agency disagreement, we might go over there to ask for a White House reconsideration of position in the light of what the agencies seemed to be coming up with. You ask how frequently, I would say that after the initial rush, not more than 5 or 10 percent of the clearance actions we took would involve White House calls or meetings.

HACKMAN: Would agencies be less likely to take the kind of objections they would have about your operation's decisions than they would with the on the size of budget requests, the other side of the Budget Bureau?

HUGHES: I think probably they're a little less likely to take our word as gospel on program substance than they are on money. There are probably a variety of reasons, for this--mostly just history, and our image in the government.

HACKMAN: How would Mr. Bell get involved in disagreements among the agencies? Would you, in some instances, go to him rather than to Sorensen or Feldman? Or at what points would he get involved in this type of thing?

HUGHES: We would always involve him if there were a significant money issue. We would also involve him if there were a significant program issue where he had a particular interest. This is something you learn. In the routine case, and in some quite important cases where either there wasn't a money issue or the money issue was settled and where we knew pretty well Dave's attitude, we dealt directly with the White House people with his understanding and concurrence.

HACKMAN: There was no problem in you having a sufficient amount of independence in this area to make decisions on your own?

HUGHES: No, not at all. This is a matter, obviously, of developing a relationship with the Director where he understands, and I understood, what he wanted to be in on and where both of us, I think, understood that the Assistant Director for Legislative Reference has a kind of a spare hat in which he becomes very frequently an arbiter among the agencies with the Bureau of the Budget as one of the competing agencies.

HACKMAN: Yes. I see. How would your role differ from handling, well, in the cases of minor legislation, let's say something like, oh, a migrant labor bill in that period which was always coming up every time which no action was really taken on it and something like the Trade Expansion Act or the Manpower Development Act? As far as the difference between your role as compared to the White House staff's role, would they handle more or any of the clearance process that you would normally handle when the big things came up?

HUGHES: Yes. That's the short answer. One of the virtues of the flexibility in the legislative clearance process is that you can abort the process at any given point and the particular objective can be sought by some other means. The process is basically informal and flexible, and it is a process, at least as I've always visualized it, which is an extension of the President in an institutional sense and maybe almost a personal sense.

A clearance process, like the budget process in many ways, is to accomplish things which the President would do for himself if this were a simpler world and he were multiplied many times. Therefore, anybody who is conducting the clearance process or the budget process needs to be prepared at any given point for the President to reach down into it and say, "I want to handle this thing from here." And this can happen in a personal sense. In an institutional sense it happens fairly frequently with important legislation. It can happen for a variety of reasons, perhaps, simply because the President or members of his staff want to know what's going on in some detail, and one of the ways to learn is to get into the process and listen to the contending parties.

Another reason is simply to settle the argument. If, as a consequence of a legislative clearance operation we're conducting, Secretary [Orville L.] Freeman calls the President or he calls Ted Sorensen and says, "The Budget Bureau is doing me in," or any of several other more kindly things that he might say, Ted then or the President has several options. He can say, "Well, you go ahead with that, and if they end up doing you in, I (the President) will make it clear through Ted or directly that I want in on the process before the sign out." Or he can say, "Well, it's a pretty important matter. Dave Bell is ordinarily a reasonably bright fellow, and he runs the legislative clearance operation. Ordinarily he isn't out of touch with me, but I'd like to know more about this.

And let's have a meeting, you and [W. Willard] Bill Wirtz and [Stewart L.] Stu Udall and so on." And then he conducts his own legislative clearance exercise really, maybe subject to some mopping up.

HACKMAN: You'd said the first time we talked that the Kennedy White House operation was, I don't know if you meant this to apply just to the early period, they wanted to feel that they had one of their own trusted people involved in working on things. I don't know. Did this continue, or did they quickly learn that they didn't have to have this on everything? I'm a little unclear on what you meant by that.

HUGHES: I guess I am too, at this point. But I think the phenomenon was a product of a variety of things. First, it is very difficult for people who have not watched the executive branch of the government and the presidency as an institution functioning, to understand the limitations on the time and the capacity of the President and his principal staff. And the effort, therefore, is to get involved in more things than you can possibly stay with and understand and accomplish.

Moving from a senator's office into the White House, I think it was perfectly normal for Ted Sorensen and Mike Feldman and others to want to understand it all. Beyond that, I'm sure there's a perfectly normal set of doubts in their minds as to who could be trusted to run the government as the President wanted to run it. And, accordingly, Mike, who's a pretty strong-minded guy, and Ted, who in a different way is equally strong-minded, wanted to follow through on various of the key enterprises and see how they went.

I think this phenomenon tended to moderate as time passes for probably the two obvious reasons: One, they didn't have time; second, I think they came to realize that at least in selected areas, in most areas, in fact, you can depend on the machinery to grind out what it's supposed to grind out, and they also learned the areas where it's difficult to depend on it. And so I think they came to have a somewhat greater trust for the institutional machinery as time passed. But the Administration remained an activist Administration. and Mike and Ted are both pretty energetic guys, and they stayed fairly well clued in on at least the major pieces of business.

HACKMAN: What department and agency people were inclined to take their problems, if they felt like they had a complaint with your operation and the Bureau, to Sorensen or Feldman or to the White House?

HUGHES: I suppose I don't really know the answer to that with any assurance. I don't think that there was more tendency on the part of some than others.

Defense and international things are peculiarly presidential, and I suppose the major issues in those areas tend to float one way or another to the White House, to the President himself. It's a long way to think back. I think some of the agency heads either from prejudice or bad experience tend to mistrust the Bureau more than other. But I don't think I'd pick any particular agency as guilty. In order to get to the White House, by and large, the agency has to float its problem up to the Secretary: he's got to make the contact there. Agency people below the Secretary or Under Secretary level, aren't in very easy or ready contact with the President himself or even perhaps with the key presidential staff.

HACKMAN: Now some of the people I had heard that other people who had worked over here had mentioned were Mr. [John S.] Gleason at Veterans' Administration and Secretary [Luther H.] Hodges at Commerce and. . . .

HUGHES: Jack Gleason had

HACKMAN: Maybe you can recall--I wrote down a couple meetings that you were at in the White House in '63 with some of the people there. I don't know whether these will bring back anything on this or not.

HUGHES: The latter two here were obviously veterans business. I can't for the life of me remember what they were. Veterans problems are always tough problems for a President. The veterans benefits antedated social security and the general welfare system, and they have been superseded to some extent by the general welfare system, and the argument is over to what extent they've been superseded. Veterans organizations say, in effect, veterans are special, and they're entitled to something on top of social security, almost without regard to the availability of other kinds of assistance. The fact that these problems are difficult politically as well as economically tends to bring a lot of them into the White House. But I just can't remember what these were about. I could perhaps look back into the files of around this time and piece it together.

The first one--come back to that--I've a vague recollection of that meeting. I think it may have related to college housing. There've been several efforts to transfer it to HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] from HUD [Housing and Urban Development] I don't remember where it is currently. I think it's still in HUD.

HACKMAN: At that point HHFA [Housing and Home Finance Agency], I guess.

HUGHES: Yes.

HACKMAN: I don't know how--we've taken these from White House appointment books, and your trips to the White House all seem to come in '63 after Mr. Gordon came in. Was this. . . . Was there any particular reason that would have happened, or can you remember other meetings that you attended with the President, because we found our lists aren't complete in all cases?

HUGHES: I was over there at other times. My meetings with the President weren't frequent then or now, or in the Eisenhower Administration either. My meetings in the White House were about daily for long periods and have been since, really. But, normally, my meetings were with Mike or Lee White. This meeting, I'm almost positive, was not a meeting with the President. I don't remember just how it happened; I don't remember the circumstances, but I don't believe the President was there. One meeting with the President related to veterans medical care, but I'm very dim on it; I'd have to look back in the files and see. But I had relatively few meetings, personal meetings with President Kennedy.

HACKMAN: In general, were your operation's decisions any more likely to be challenged under the Kennedy Administration than under the Johnson Administration or under the Eisenhower Administration?

HUGHES: No, I don't think so.

HACKMAN: I had wondered if Sorensen and Feldman were more likely to hear things or the President was.

HUGHES: No, I don't believe so. I'd say probably more the other way around. In the Eisenhower Administration, I, in effect, fell heir to the job that Roger Jones had done, and you always go through a period of kind of self establishment in these circumstances. The Kennedy Administration kind of inherited me along with the Bureau of the Budget as an institution, and the fact that I was on the scene and that I'd known Dave Bell from his prior Budget Bureau and White House service was quite helpful. I think we delivered pretty well in early assignments and as time passed, and that produces a fair amount of confidence. There isn't any substitute for being right in the business of what the President's position is, and if you're right a few times in a row and win a few fairly tough arguments, then you don't have much trouble.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any of the fairly few tough arguments that you won that established this?

HUGHES: Well, I think that some of the work we did very early on the Area Redevelopment Bill was quite helpful. We got the agencies all together. Mike Feldman was on the scene for this, and watched the process work and I think found not just me in the personal sense but the Bureau as an institution responsive to what President Kennedy had said he wanted done. And the fact that in this kind of a meeting involving a large number of agencies Mike participated and let us handle things helped us immensely.

HACKMAN: Can you remember on this, was it the Bureau's position that ARA should be put in Commerce? Or did Feldman have strong feelings on this? I've heard various views on where the actual impetus to put it in Commerce came from. I know Douglas and Batt were probably for an independent.

HUGHES: Yes. I don't recall clearly, but I'm reasonably confident that the Bureau supported putting the agency in Commerce, just on general doctrinal grounds, there were already too many agencies reporting to the President. And somebody needed to give this new agency direct and tender loving care or a sort that a Secretary can give and the President could not give if it were simply an independent agency floating around.

HACKMAN: Can you recall any problems coming up in this relationship of ARA within Commerce as the Administration developed?

HUGHES: No, I think not really. I think the internal relationships between Batt and Hodges were probably reasonably good, at least insofar as we were involved in them. I think the problems have been more acute in the last few years than in the prior ones probably.

HACKMAN: How much of a problem was it for people in the departments, from what you could see, to know who to deal with at the White House level with their problems? I've heard someone who was over here say that they thought things were much more confused than in the Eisenhower period on who to go to at the White House with their problems.

HUGHES: I think that was so to an extent. I don't think confuse is the word, but the comparison that one tends to make is between the closing months or years of a particular administration and the beginning months or years of a new one. And that's an unfair comparison. Added to that was the fact that the White House in the Kennedy Administration was deliberately less structured: except for the sharp demarcation between tactics and substance, it was considerably

less structured than the Eisenhower Administration. President Eisenhower was used to line and staff concepts and the military concepts of staff support, and he structured the White House so that it conformed with his notions. President Kennedy, on the other hand, was used to running a Senate office and wanted, I think, philosophically and structurally a somewhat looser operation. But as time passed, I think the question of who to talk to really got clarified.

HACKMAN: Would this have tended to cause people to bring more problems over here because they would have some difficulty, especially in the early period, in going to someone on the White House staff? Maybe not to your part of this operation.

HUGHES: Perhaps so. I wasn't particularly conscious of that. It may have been.

HACKMAN: Did you feel that on some decisions that were problems in the White House that they let you take a lot of the heat for making rulings on legislation?

HUGHES: Oh, sure. That's a standard role for the Bureau.

HACKMAN: Okay, did they talk in these terms to you or was this unconscious? I mean, was there ever any decision?

HUGHES: Yes, they understood that. This is a standard doctrine, almost a public administration doctrine, that good news comes from the President and bad news comes from the Budget Bureau.

HACKMAN: Would they enunciate this when they were talking to you that in a certain area, well, you know, this is your problem, don't call us?

HUGHES: Yes. Close to those terms. Or "Yes, you're right; the answer is no to this particular congressman on this particular project, but you tell him and keep him off our back."

HACKMAN: You talked briefly about O'Brien's operation. Did they in general do a good job of understanding the legislation they were supporting, or would it have helped if they would have talked more frequently with you?

HUGHES: Well, they were a pretty busy bunch of guys. I guess other than to kind of generalize that the more anybody knows, the better off they are, it's pretty hard for me to say.

I guess I've dealt with it in conversation with you before, but I indicated my own view that a sharp division between tactics and substance isn't the way I'd run the White House if I were President. I think, whatever the advantages of that specialization, there are sharp disadvantages because the tacticians tend to take over at key points in the legislative process and without as much understanding of substance as they might otherwise have. I just don't know how this balances off the advantages they have from being able to specialize in knowing individual congressmen and perhaps parliamentary procedure and rules, to an extent, and other things essentially tactical, that it would be very difficult for them to learn or to keep in mind if they were splitting their time between substance and tactics.

My own bias would be toward a somewhat more mixed operation. I think the Bureau had a good channel of communications to O'Brien. I think he and Sorensen and their respective staffs communicated as well as time and circumstances permitted. They understood this problem, too, I think. So that it's pretty hard to say. I couldn't name a bill where in any real sense we were "done in" by the tacticians because they didn't understand the issue. There may have been some at a particular time where we felt they gave up on the wrong issue, but these are tough questions of judgment.

HACKMAN: What types of relationship did your operation develop with the liaison people in the various departments, the legislative liaison people?

HUGHES: Well, not too different from the Sorensen-Feldman relationship. We were right on the end of the phone line, and when they were uncertain as to a position, they would call us, probably before they'd call Feldman and Sorensen. We were more accessible: we have files for reference and to back us up; and if we can't remember what the position was on a particular one of a thousand bills, we can look it up in a matter of seconds or minutes and let them know. So they inquired of us as to where we stood on this or that. Sometimes they'd twist our arm if they thought we were being unduly doctrinaire, or whether they thought so or not, if they had a problem that a different position might have helped, they'd press us a little bit to see how strongly we felt a particular position was right. We in turn talked to them about the impact of public works projects or reports on them and how it would affect their programs and their relationships.

HACKMAN: Did the way this operated in various departments vary in great degree from department to department as to how much influence or how much competence or responsibility the legislative liaison operations had?

HUGHES: I don't think so. I think our credit was pretty good. Agencies didn't always, like what we were doing, but I think they regarded us as a reasonably honest broker with due regard for human frailty and generally as having some understanding of the problem and accurately attempting to reflect presidential opinion.

HACKMAN: We'd talked briefly about Executive orders last time, just that first food stamp order, if you remember. To what extent, in general, as things developed, did your operation feel that the Administration was overextending the use of the Executive order as a tool? Were there many times when this came up?

HUGHES: Yes. I think so. Not overextending in a legal sense. We were used to a somewhat different set of attitudes with regard to the use of presidential "credit", and our general predisposition, I think, then as now, is to argue that the President ought to husband his credit and save it for important investments. The Kennedy people, rightly or wrongly--and looking back on it, it's hard to say whether it was right or wrong--used the President's position, his prestige, his credit, with much less restraint than we would have proposed. This was true on Executive orders; it was certainly true in messages and statements of various kinds. But again, I think, worth emphasis, we weren't concerned, generally, that they were doing by Executive order what ought to be done by statute; rather, we were just concerned that the volume of material which was coming out of the White House tended to be self-defeating.

HACKMAN: Was there any difference in the way the Justice Department got involved in Executive orders under Norbert Schlei over there?

HUGHES: Norbert Schlei?

HACKMAN: Yes.

HUGHES: I don't recall any. Again, you ought to talk with the General Counsel (who does the Executive order business), Art Focke. But the processes stayed pretty much the same, as far as I can recall, and not just in terms of what the instructions are but in terms of how it actually worked.

HACKMAN: There was an Executive order on Executive orders, messages, and proclamations, I believe, that came out in '62. Can you remember any particular reason why that was put out? Was this on the processes?

HUGHES: No. I can't remember. I doubt if there was any change of significance, but, again, Art could tell you. We reissued circular A-19, the legislative

clearance circular, also, somewhere along the line. But there hadn't been any change in the substance of the circular since post-World War II period. We operated on the Truman circular for most of the Eisenhower Administration. Then Maury Stans, reissued the circular by direction of President Eisenhower, but there wasn't any really significant change. And we used that, I think, all during the Kennedy Administration and changed it again in a rather technical way after President Johnson became President. I remember talking with Walter Jenkins about what we were doing and how we were doing it and whether he wanted it that way, and we stayed with it.

HACKMAN: Since, well, I would think, more of the impetus for Executive orders was coming from the White House rather than some of the departments as it had maybe in previous administrations. Would this have changed your role in the clearance process on Executive orders? Would things come to the White House and already be formulated and decided, come from the White House?

HUGHES: Well, I don't think really. There are two kinds of questions with respect to an order or a piece of legislation, for that matter. The first question is do we really want to do it? And the second one is essentially the "how" question. That's, what are the more technical aspects? Whether the White House was involved in the first question or not answering the "how," just requires the order to go through the machinery because "how" questions are generally technical questions. Sometimes may have had marching orders on the question of whether to do it at all but not on the question of how we were to go about it. And sometimes, even when we had the marching orders, we did our usual and said, "Are you really sure that you want to do it this way?" As we discussed in connection with the food stamp order a couple times, "these kinds of things are going to happen, and we believe you ought to think about them."

HACKMAN: What about on proposals for Executive orders on placement of government programs or reorganizations? I'm thinking like the Peace Corps and the AID [Agency for International Development] reorganization. Would these come to you and then what, would you present your views at that point?

HUGHES: Yes. Let's see now, were these done by order? The Peace Corps . . .

HACKMAN: The Peace Corps the first time.

HUGHES: . . . the first time around, preliminary legislation.

HACKMAN: March first.

HUGHES: Yes, yes, those came through us. The question as to whether it ought to be done at all by order came to us, and what they'd use for money, and so on. And it did come to us from whatever the nucleus of the Peace Corps staff was at that point. I'm trying to think of some of the names. . . .

HACKMAN: Well, [R. Sargent] Shriver and Warner, not Warner, but--the fellow over there? Well, Harris Wofford was working over there.

HUGHES: The guy we did a lot of business . . .

HACKMAN: Weaver, is it Weaver? [Warren W.] Wiggins, Wiggins, Warren Wiggins.

HUGHES: Warren Wiggins, yes. The guy we did a lot of business with was the General Counsel, he's a. . . .

HACKMAN: Jacobson?

HUGHES: Josephson. Bill Josephson.

HACKMAN: Bill Josephson, yes. He was the first guy over there, that's right. I had wondered if you could remember if you had any particular objections to the way that was done or

HUGHES: Well, I think we did. As I think back on it, it was an unorthodox kind of an arrangement, and the Bureau did what I think it should do: It pointed out the arrangement was unorthodox and might raise a fair number of hackles in the Congress. We thought there ought to be some checking out and some base touching in the Congress if it hasn't already been done. And it had not been done. These kinds of questions were raised, but the order moved on through. I think the Bureau's influence, by and large, was a constructive one. And somewhere in the file will be the letter on the order transmitting it to Justice which says the order has the approval of the Director of the Bureau of the Budget.

HACKMAN: Did your operation get more involved in the writing of these special messages which you said they used more frequently than it had under other administrations, previous administrations?

HUGHES: Well, we've always been fairly heavily in the message writing or message clearance business. I don't think relatively greater or less than would have been the case in the Eisenhower Administration. There were more messages, so we were in it more time-wise, but not in terms of depth of involvement

HACKMAN: Would the extent that you got involved in writing a special message have anything to do with the amount of confidence that the Administration had in the departments involved? For instance, I've heard that from time to time Commerce, things which had to do with Commerce, would be handled more in the Budget Bureau because they weren't satisfied with things that were coming out of Commerce. Can you recall that being so, or any other agencies where this might have been so?

HUGHES: Yes. I think there was a tendency to involve us more in some kinds of activities than others, and this related to a qualitative appraisal somewhat. But it was a difference in degree and with rather narrow limits, I think, rather than any difference in kind. The messages routinely would come here for looking at. Certain ones would come with some kind of instruction that we ought to give them particular attention because they didn't look too good. But beyond that, I don't think there was much difference in the treatment.

We also had (and have) a very heavy inter-agency coordination responsibility in the Kennedy Administration, perhaps in some ways--I'm talking about messages still--in some ways perhaps a little heavier than in the current Administration where there's more tendency to do the messages over there and run them through our machinery here as a kind of coordinating device and for figure checking. That was probably less true in the Kennedy Administration. Again, there were less messages in the Kennedy than in the Johnson Administration and Ted wrote damn near all of them, or perhaps, Ted and the President did.

HACKMAN: I've heard that in the very early days of the Administration there were some problems created because the President would give department heads the go-ahead on some things which had not been adequately cleared or staffed. Can you remember this coming up in any specific instance?

HUGHES: No. It's a phenomenon in the early days of any administration, and it doesn't necessarily go away as the time passes, either. The Presidents and I guess their staff members are pressed hard to say yes to almost anything. Do you want to cut the budget? Yes. Do you want to add projects? Yes. I think, particularly in the early days of any administration, the President's tendency and the tendency of his staff members is to say yes without realizing the consequences of the yes, and then the problem becomes one of getting out of the commitment.

As time passes, I think successive administrations learn how to duck, and that's a rather important thing to learn--duck

in the sense that if some guy says, "You're for this, Mr. President," then the President says, "That's a very interesting proposition. I think it's well worth looking into. Why don't you talk to Secretary Udall about it?" But for a guy that wants to be decisive and so on, it's not an easy thing to come to. It's a lot more fun to say yes. Well, I don't think the problem was particularly acute even in the early days of the Kennedy Administration.

HACKMAN: We talked a little bit before about the amount of confidence that the Administration had in things coming from various departments. Was it a problem for you to keep departments involved in some cases where the White House might have tended to exclude them in the decision-making process with something they should be consulted on?

HUGHES: Yes. I think that with regard to the problem of striking a balance between the institutions of government and the personalities of government, the legislative clearance process and the budget process both, are in some sense brokerage processes. Through these processes, we are supposed to perform certain functions, and to touch the bases and give opportunities to the principally affected people to comment, object, or what have you. And it can be a very painful thing to do, and I've seen the time when I would grit my teeth over the prospect of sending a particular bill for views to an agency. I knew what I was going to get: nothing but trouble, maybe abuse along with the trouble. And you can be tempted not to ask them. But in terms of the ongoing functions of government and support of the basic institutions of government, it's vital that those guys who have an interest have a chance to comment; you've got to face up to them; you can't just ignore them.

But then, back to your question, the White House staff guys have both a different time perspective and a different set of problems. And they've got a different perspective other than time because if Luther Hodges complained to them, they can always say, "Oh, gee, didn't the Budget Bureau talk to you about that?" And Luther says, "No, them so-and sos." And they say, "Yes, aren't they?" And so on. But the Bureau of the Budget as an institution must do business year in and year out, not just with Mr. Hodges, but with the Department of Commerce and with the career guys down, but not too far down, in the Department.

HACKMAN: Was there ever any suggestion from the White House staff that, "Look, on this, ignore this person," or, "Don't bring this institution in"?

HUGHES: Yes.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any?

HUGHES: I don't remember any for instances, but it happens in all administrations, and it's just something that I think the White House staff need to be kind of educated on. You can't do business that way in the long run when sooner or later you've got to confront Mr. X, whoever he may be, and it's probably easier to confront him if he's not mad over being bypassed.

HACKMAN: What responsibilities did your shop have in terms of briefing department people who were going up to Congress in terms of materials? Or were there personal contacts on this?

HUGHES: We had the general responsibility in the legislative area and in also the budget area of. . . . I'll separate the two. In the budget area our responsibility really is limited to figures. They must support the President's budget and its content and the assumptions on which it is put together.

In the legislative area, under terms of this circular A-19, the agencies must submit reports and testimony for clearance, that is for advice. Advice is not necessarily censorship; as a matter of fact, insofar as statements and reports are concerned, we stoutly maintain it isn't in an ultimate sense. We twist arms and we haggle and so on, but when all the chips are down, if the agency head decides he wants to say something, he can say it even though it conflicts with what we think is the right position or what some other agency thinks is the right position or even on occasion what the President thinks is the right position. But very obviously, the clearance process provides a lot of chance for people to make inputs and twist arms and influence and so on. So it's fairly rare when we end up with a serious difference of view. Either a compromise is worked out or somebody gives up.

HACKMAN: There was no shift during the Kennedy period in the whole approach to this thing in trying to. . . .

HUGHES: No, I think generally the Kennedy Administration tended to insist on somewhat tighter discipline than the Eisenhower Administration had. I can recall talking with Mike and Ted Sorensen right after the election about the clearance process and how we ran it. And I remember I put emphasis on the extent to which we cleared agency views ultimately even though they might disagree with some other agency. I was

anticipating they would look at this from their prior senatorial or congressional standpoint and would want to make sure that the Congress got the truth.

I was working the wrong side of the street, however, because they had already made the switch to the executive branch and they wanted to make sure there was adequate discipline within it. So that I shortly was trying to keep them from doing what I thought would do damage to the Administration by being over insistent on conformity. With regard to positions of the agencies which were pretty well established over the years in the Congress, there probably isn't much point in trying to make a Forest Service witness say something that the Forest Service hasn't ever thought was the thing to do. I don't think that is right, anyway.

HACKMAN: Do you have to go at five?

HUGHES: That's a little fast. What is it? About five minutes?

HACKMAN: Yes, I can do it in five minutes, I think.

HUGHES: Yes.

HACKMAN: Did the Kennedy Administration tend to send up more legislation personally in the President's name rather than in the names of the departments? Did you usually express a view on this when this would come up?

HUGHES: Yes, the same view that I've expressed earlier. This is part of the "presidential credit" problem. If he is personally associated with too much it gets very difficult to tell, you know, what is really important. Now that has pluses and minuses. If it's hard to tell what's important, you can play it fast and loose a little later and that has advantages. But on the other hand, I think there is waste in identifying the President with too broad a spectrum of proposals.

HACKMAN: Was this a point you had continued to bring up all the way through or did they. . . .

HUGHES: Oh, I would continue. I'd remind them periodically that all human beings are finite and limited.

HACKMAN: All right, just skipping to a couple of sort of disjointed things or unconnected things. What kinds of problems came up in the press wanting information from the Budget Bureau? Do you people frequently get requests from the press here? What kind of guidelines did you operate under in the Kennedy Administration as to who you could talk to, or were directives from the White House involved?

HUGHES: I don't think there were any directives per se. Generally, budget information is considered privileged until it's on the Hill, until the budget is on the Hill. And it's not supposed to leak, unless the President leaks it: figures, supporting data, anticipated programs and that kind of stuff. So that as far as this kind of material is concerned, up until the time the budget's published, we just don't respond. There's a series of circulars and papers which say you can't do this.

With respect to the clearance process and other things than the budget, we followed pretty much the same ground rule. We were pretty chary about giving out information until it's in the public arena. There are a lot of reasons for that, not just protection of the President. We generally regard the committee that requests a report as the releasing agent. Therefore, if they ask us for views, we give them views, and we would tell inquirers, "Yes, we've reported to the committee. You talk to them." Or we'd say we were about to report or whatever the case might be, and it's up to them to release it. Inquiries as to status we generally are very vague on because we're subjected to pressure, and the President is subjected to pressure. As a matter of general policy, not just Kennedy Administration, we tend to take the heat here rather than in the White House. If we've sent something over there for action and it's been there for three weeks, that would be the last thing we'd say, normally.

HACKMAN: Did leaks on the White House side of the operation create any significant problems for you people over here?

HUGHES: Yes, particularly if it's very hard to tell who leaked it and why. I mean it's hard for us to either not look silly on the one hand or louse things up on the other hand.

HACKMAN: Was this prevalent during the Kennedy Administration more or less so than others?

HUGHES: No, I don't think so. I think Kennedy press relationships by and large in this respect were pretty well handled, pretty well controlled.

HACKMAN: One other thing, there were a couple of personnel changes in directors over here. Ellis, is it Vetch [Ellis H. Veatch]?

HUGHES: Veatch.

HACKMAN: Veatch, replaced . . .

HUGHES: Schwab [William F. Schaub].

HACKMAN: Yes, and Robert Amory replaced Robert Macy on the international side. Why did these come about? Was this a normal turnover of some sort or. . . .

HUGHES: Well, I'd say, let me think about it. First, there was Bill Schaub. S-C-H-A-U-B. I said Schwab. Bill Schaub was near retirement. He had an opportunity to go over to Defense as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Finance, I believe, and he wanted to take advantage of it. I can't remember quite what the circumstances were, but he did. And Ellis Veatch was his Deputy and moved up, a normal change.

Bob Amory for Bob Macy--I think the circumstances were somewhat different, but still pretty well within the normal category. Macy had been in the Bureau for several years, had a deep interest in international affairs, had an opportunity to go as mission chief, I think it was to Jordan. It represented both an opportunity for some foreign residence and advancement. And so he took advantage of that. Bob Amory was with CIA and was affected--it's not quite clear to me how--in the general shake-up of CIA that took place at that point. He was brought over here as new blood from outside. To the best of my knowledge, there was no special significance to the change either to Macy going out or Amory coming in, although it was somewhat different from the Veatch-Schaub change.

HACKMAN: Was there any significant change in the size of your own staff? You'd suggested that there was a lot more activity with. . . .

HUGHES: No, over a period of years we have deliberately kept the office of legislative reference relatively level. There are about the same number of people now there were in '53, I think, when the Bureau was reorganized, around twenty, maybe twenty-one at this point. And I think, generally speaking, that's enough. The increased activity we dealt with in a variety of ways: somewhat less formal procedures; somewhat more involvement of the divisions of the Bureau in the legislative clearance process than before; and obviously, some more leaning on the agencies.

HACKMAN: That's all I had.

HUGHES: Fine.