

Kenneth P. O'Donnell Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 04/03/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Kenneth P. O'Donnell

Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman

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Biographical Note

Appointment Secretary to the President, 1961 - 1963; Special Assistant to the President, 1961 – 1965, Campaign Manager, Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] presidential campaign, 1968. In this interview, O'Donnell discusses RFK's early political aspirations, his decision to run for president, and staff and strategy for his political campaign, among other issues.

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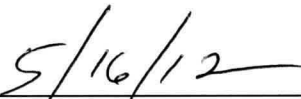
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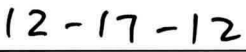
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Kenneth P. O'Donnell – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

KENNETH P. O'DONNELL

April 3, 1969

Boston, Massachusetts

By Larry S. Hackman

HACKMAN:

Well, I know that in late ~~1967~~ you were
 at that meeting in ^[Beverly Co #07] Salinger's suite in
 New York ^{at} ~~in~~ the Regency Hotel, ^{now} this was
 October sometime. [^] What I want to do is
 go back from there and find out what kind
 of conversations you had with Robert Kennedy
 earlier that year and even during the whole
 1964-1968 period about what his political
 future was and what he was thinking about. ^{and}

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When he started to consider the possibility
of running in '68.

O'DONNELL: Well, do you want to start it in '64 or
how do you want to do it? Go backwards?

HACKMAN: ^{would rather} Just get a general discussion of ~~the~~ direction
he was moving in, say from 1964-1968, but not
that much detail. ^{break this out} Primarily concentrate
on 1967. ^{late 1967}

O'DONNELL: Let me start in '64 [?] cause I think it's
probably easier from my viewpoint. The
Vice Presidential thing we just wipe out [?]
and we start when he is elected to the
United States Senate, and I think he felt
at that time without question that Lyndon
Johnson was going to be very strong, and
I don't think the Presidency entered his
mind in '64. He was learning how to be a
Senator, ^c coming from a state, ^{that} he wasn't
terribly familiar with and trying to get
together ^{part of what} and settled with the political
situation was up there. The conversations

I had with him in '65 and running into '66 were more my thoughts and judgement on the people I'd known in the New York political area. Whether Frank O'Connor was going to run for Governor? What he ought to do. ^{And} he got involved in the Sam Silverman, Judge Silverman situation and was being pressured very strongly that he ought to move in and take over the organization which he had inclinations not to want to do. I think he began-- we had ^{had} some differences of opinion in Vietnam, ^{on} ~~had~~ ^{I'd} been against Vietnam since '61 ^{and} vociferously and we had a lot of arguments. As he had moved more progressively into this field with General ^[Maxwell D.] Taylor and others, he was concerned but he hadn't really. . . . By '65 he'd made it a rather ~~clear~~ ^{clear} that he just couldn't see the war, the priorities, and that ^{was} the position he was ultimately to adopt. He was feeling his way ^{too} but he was always concerned that it looked like it was a personal vendetta with he and Lyndon Johnson which didn't help anybody. I think he bent over

backwards to try to give the President whatever benefit there was. We used to talk maybe once a week. He was never a great Senate man, and he had become I think in the Civil Rights area-- this was really a part of him whereas prior to that, he was as President Kennedy was rather objective about what the problems were and how you'd get there and there were other things ^{that} perhaps had some priority in his thinking. ^{By} In '65 he had begun ^{really} to focus in on what he thought were the two great things disturbing the United States, and one was poverty and the blacks, and the other was the war in Vietnam.

Johnson started to fade terribly in '65, as you recollect and Bobby I think got interested. around '66 ^{that's} there in fact, somebody had to do something about it and that the President was doing a rather poor job in his judgement, and he began to campaign in '66 around the country, and the polls started to show he was much more popular than Johnson.

Well, that began to start him thinking now, that he might possibly be a candidate in '68 or that possibly he had an obligation to be a candidate in '68. When we were defeated as badly as we were in '66 as Democrats -- and the President, I thought, handled it terribly badly in canceling out all his engagements at the end ^{letter} that he'd been over in Manila. That's when he ^s started to deteriorate, in my judgement. I think at the end of the '66 election that Bobby pretty much had thought that he might run in '68. In '67, as he came into focus a little stronger, his popularity started to diminish, too, which he has said publicly I think. As the people began to think he might run, those who were against Lyndon Johnson but maybe not for Robert Kennedy started ^{to} a shift, as they always do. But by '67 he was in -- it was in ferment in his mind and coming up late in the year of '67, he talked rather regularly, he was ^{very} ^{very} disturbed about it, and the thing that disturbed him most of all was the misinterpretation of what

his. . . that he just wanted to get
 back in the White House and that the Kennedy's
 wanted the Presidency back, and this really
 upset him personally very much. I think
 it was the one real drag in his thinking.
 I think if his name had been something else,
 I think Bobby Kennedy would have announced
 for President in 1967 and taken Johnson on
 without any question whatsoever, but he just
 felt that number one, it would be so misinter-
 preted that it not only would be wrong from
 his own viewpoint but that he probably would
 be defeated because of the fashion which he ^{would}
 entered ^{nothing} and it was kind of a contest and
 it would be something of a vendetta attitude
 and atmosphere. I think the first meetings
 that we had now you said '67 in Salinger's
 Is that the first?

HACKMAN: The first one I've seen reported major meetings
 and this is the one Robert Kennedy didn't
 attend, was ^{at} in Salinger's suite in the Regency
 Hotel in New York in October.

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O'BONNELL:

He called me, Larry, and asked me would I attend such a meeting and I asked him who was going to be there and wasn't enthused about some of the people who were there because I'll be frank with you a lot of the ones there love to talk to newspaper men and frankly my presence there in my judgement whether they like it or not -- My association is so close to the President in a political sense that I thought that it'd be politically hazardous for me to be there. So I talked to Pierre (Salinger) and I think we made some changes about people who should come and who should not come and also I very strongly felt that the Senator (Robert F. Kennedy) should not attend; that he could not survive that kind of a meeting and there were people there that are going to talk to newspaper men if you'd shot them. So I talked Bobby out of going to the meeting. The meeting was, as most of the meetings that I've attended in this fashion, was just the

most inconclusive bunch of crap thrown
around. No one knew what they were talking
about, really, or where they're going or
what the problems were. If anything came
out of it, it was the fact that he shouldn't
run. I think if I had actively said that I think
Robert Kennedy ought to run, I think it would
have had a lot of influence, but I didn't.
I wasn't prepared to say that. At the moment
I wasn't sure he ought to run, and I wasn't
quite sure of the direction that he was going
in or he was thinking about, and I was very
unsure of the direction of some of those who were
urging him to run, whether their interests
for him or not confused me. And I said then
and I repeated it, if the issue were Vietnam
and really the character of the United States
of America, hell, I thought he had an
obligation to go, but if the issue was just
sort of a "we've got to get our guy back in
the White House" which it very clearly was
almost for a lot of people around him, it
was a terrible error.

HACKMAN:

Who did you feel particularly that about, which of the people/ which were ^{more} ^{most} concerned, as you were, with the direction of the country and which were more politically minded?

O'DONNELL:

Well, I think amongst this group the staff around Bobby, like any other staff, I suppose, was motivated in getting him to the White House. Teddy's [Edward M. Kennedy] now ^{feeding} playing the same ball game. You sometimes lose your perspective. Adam Walinsky and Peter Edelman and some of those boys, I don't ^{know} too many of them very well, but they're very, very bright, high-minded young fellows, but they really don't know the ball game, and they really were pushing the Senator in a direction where he was very reluctant to go. And I think their reasons were very immature reasons. They didn't realize the type of potential opposition that they really were dealing with. Sorensen [Theodore C.] was ^{really} disinterested, almost, to some degree. He

never too really took any positions one way or the other, and everybody sets up the hypothesis that he ought to do ~~it~~ ^{but} then when you say do you think he ought to do it, they change their mind. ^{Fred} Dutton (Frederick G.)

[Richard No] [^]

was the most practical. Fred is a "pol". Dick Goodwin was all rather highly excited about it. I think Dick Goodwin was probably more interested in beating Lyndon Johnson than he was in electing Robert Kennedy. I don't think he meant that, but that's what I got out of it. Teddy was most reluctant. I think he saw the peril in it very clearly, and obviously some of the fallout was going to land on him, too. He's a politician and a United States Senator. Pierre, Pierre loves to get in the middle of things. He was one of the more enthusiastic for Bobby involving himself. ^{I think} Pierre just kind of likes to get in the center of the storm. Steve

[Stephen E.] Smith had really almost nothing to say at ^{any of these} that meeting. He just sat and ^{at the first place} listened. However, it is a group which, despite

what the press says ^{that} did not meet
with President Kennedy as a group and
discuss at any time any particular issues.

There are those ^{there that} he pretended to talk to,
^{but} ^{he} and when you get down to the political

decisions, he would meet with some people
separately, but he would never put Ted
Sorensen and Ken O'Donnell and Bob Kennedy
into a group. He took us one by one, or

he might take Bobby and I together, ^{and then he'd take}
Sorensen separately, ^{and might} or he talk to Arthur
Schlesinger, ^{he} but ^{he} wouldn't group us because

we do have such divergent personalities and
approaches that what comes out of it,

came out of these meetings -- nothing. We'd

end up being mad at each other most of the
time, and each one thinks they're smarter than
the other fellow is. That's why I didn't

want Bobby know part of it, because it's
just going to end up as a fight. Out of

that meeting I left there, and I'd say that -

I talked to Bobby after it was over and just

told him I thought it was totally incon-
 clusive and that he ought to be very wary
 that he ^{is} go in his own direction and not
 being pushed by people who ⁱⁿ a high-minded
 fashion ^{but} might have other motivations and
~~there~~ ^{there} of course ~~the~~ ^{he} did not
 were leaving across the ~~the~~ ^{it} very
 shortly. As I suspected ^{it} within twenty-four
 hours I got a call from the New York Times
 and they knew as much about the meeting as
 I did.

HACKMAN: Did you ever find out how that-- I know that
 [Evans] [Novak] Evans and Novak had the article on it, too.
 Did you ever find out how that did get out?

O'DONNELL: I really didn't have any interest in it
 because the meeting was a total flop. I
 went down just as a personal favor to Bobby
 Kennedy. I know what comes out of those kinds
 of meetings unless the candidate says, "Look,
 I'm going to go" or "I'm not going to go".
 Just to sit around and talk about something
 that's just not going to happen ^{isn't} make

any sense. But if I didn't go, Bobby'd get mad at me, so I just did it. I went down and wasted a day and came home.

HACKMAN:

when
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You said earlier that you'd been able to keep some people from coming because of the fear of them going to the press. Was this primarily the Edelman, Walinsky people or *were there...* I can't remember ~~if~~ ^{if} someone has told me that Schlesinger was there, ^{one} ~~some~~ ^{one} ~~else~~ ^{one} ~~said~~ ^{said} that Schlesinger wasn't ~~there~~ at that meeting. Do you remember?

O'DONNELL:

I don't remember whether Arthur was. . . . I think Larry any meeting with more than seven people is going to be leaked out. I'm not critical of that even if somebody there told somebody else. They may not have told anybody themselves, and I doubt very much if anybody there did tell anybody themselves, ~~but~~ ^{but} particularly because they move in literary circles at all times. - - Arthur (Schlesinger), Ted Sorensen, and Dick (Richard) Goodwin spend most of their

time talking to writers and newspaper people, and they're in New York, and they're the center of communication, and it's just almost human nature to say that you had a conversation. Or someone saw me in town with Pierre Salinger, immediately they say, "What the hell's going on? There must be a big meeting." Well, there was a meeting. We went down to Toots Shor's and had a few drinks; that was the meeting. But these things come out, and this came out and sort of ^{through} Lyndon [Johnson] into a tizzy. There really isn't anything wrong with it. It is a political group, and we are thinking about the problems of the United States of America, and some of us have been candidates and may intend to be at some moment. We are part of the political system, ^{as if he had set} but Bobby was always the sufferer. He didn't have anything to do with setting up the meeting; it was all Pierre Salinger's idea and a good one. I think at that moment to sort of assess what was going on in the

United States of America was maybe an obligation of some of us. But it turned out totally inconclusive. Was that October?

HACKMAN: It was October. Now I've heard-- I thought maybe you could remember something about the approximate date. I don't know if you've read that Witcover [Jules] book Eighty-Five Days. He says it's very late October, someone else says it's early October.

BPALDING: Now there's a second one comes up shortly after that. . .

HACKMAN: There's one in December the two in New York; one at Vanden heuvel's [William] and one at the shipping firm, is this the one you're thinking of?

O'DONNELL: Yeah, now the one at the shipping firm is prior to McCarthy's [Eugene & J] entrance as I recall it now.

HACKMAN: The ones I'm thinking about are in December[↑]
so if there's another one in New York
before McCarthy's announcement[↑] I don't know
about it.

O'DONNELL: There were.

HACKMAN: The shipping firm is in December^{through} That's after
McCarthy.

O'DONNELL: That's the next one I remember. That was
a very surreptitious meeting of the. . . .
Teddy (Edward M. Kennedy) was at that one[↑]
and we had some words.

HACKMAN: This is the first part of that at Vanden heuvel's
or the second part ?

O'DONNELL: Yeah, at Vanden heuvel's, yeah. And we got
onto the Vietnamese situation. I think
whether McCarthy had entered^{had} he may have
entered by then^{..}

HACKMAN: November 30th⁷ he announced.

O'DONNELL:

November 30th⁷ so he was in it, and we
 got discussing the hawk-dove sort of
 relationship. Senator Kennedy and I had
 some rather harsh words. My assessment
 was that the doves were in pretty good
 shape, and that McCarthy was going to shock
 them. And we talked about the State of
 Massachusetts, and he said that he had taken
 a poll, and I said I didn't believe the poll.
 I had been speaking all over the state and
 I'd been one hundred percent against the War.

I speak at Holy Name breakfasts and they're ^{are}

the most conservative Irish Catholic and
^{the old} ~~the old~~ (Joseph)
 they're ~~not~~ McCarthy supporters, and after
 fifteen minutes they don't support the
 situation, and I think there is a misjudgement
 of the entire situation. It was quite
 clear that I was rather a minority, a strong
 minority view. But I don't think anybody
 really supported my viewpoint at that meeting
 except I think Pierre. Some of the others

took the same moral position. They just felt that the "hawk" situation, -particularly in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, that we were precisely talking about at that moment. . . .

That meeting was almost a total decision that he would not run as I recall it. Ted Kennedy was the clearest. He thought it was a mistake that the hawks were in the ascendency in the United States and that in his judgement he just could not go. Steve (Stephen E. Smith) at that one as I recall and as I say Steve very seldom got into much of the argument about it. I think this really almost was totally on the War. And I think out of that meeting, he was not a candidate. When I left that meeting I figured that's the end of the ball game.

(W)

Personally, (Gene J.) General McCarthy had called me about a week later, I guess and asked me if I'd run his campaign which I did not, could not. I said, " I can't do

it one way ^{of the} ~~of the~~ ^(an) other, despite the fact
that I happen to agree with you on the
issues, but no matter what I do it's going
to be Bob Kennedy. I can't get out--
even though I don't even discuss politics
with Bobby Kennedy, to be perfectly honest
with you, except in his own -- I can't get
away from it because every reporter in
the country is going to think it's some
great scheme and trick, and we're just
caught." But Gene and I had a very long
conversation both about New Hampshire and
here. He left from there, as I recall, and
went out to Chicago and went to a meeting
which he was unable to decide on the
decide ^{when} on the Massachusetts group -- to talk ^{and}
~~them into the~~ ^{take} -- that's when he and Teddy
had the fight. He announced from Chicago,
and Teddy said he had understood that he was
supposed to have a conversation and but. . . .
And Then I talked to Bobby, ^{as} ~~and~~ I say, in
the December meeting. I don't think I went

to this third meeting. I think I declined to go; I was invited, but I don't think I went.

HACKMAN: That's the one at the shipping firm, you mean.

O'DONNELL: I went to the one at the shipping firm, but if there was one at Vanden heuvel's, I never went to that one. I think that was a New York group pretty much. Bobby's fellows didn't come to any of these, Larry.

HACKMAN: Yeah, the Edelman (Peter) and Walinsky (Adam) people, I know. Did he ever discuss why he was leaving them out or why they were left out? I've seen it reported once that he asked you to talk to some of these young people to pool them down a little bit and tell them what. . .

O'DONNELL: . . . This is a little later now. this is a little later. I think Bobby looked at it as number one, as this is sort of the senior advisory group. I think he understood they

are committed, therefore he knew what their views were and what he thought that perhaps some of us had ~~had~~ ^{that} A) were not involved with him in that kind of a sense and were talking to people ~~who~~ ^{that} were a little different. . . .
 If a consensus had arisen out ~~of~~ ^{then = a group} that group earlier that he ought to run he would've run. The fact is this group confused him more than they helped him because we did have different views on the whole situation. But I think he just felt he knew his own. . . .

This third meeting somebody called me and I just didn't bother to go because I just felt that it ~~was~~ was all up to the Senator anyway. He had listened to all the arguments pros and cons that existed and the next time I saw him is before the primary in New Hampshire. I was in his office socially, frankly I was down on business of my own and I just dropped by to say hello and we went through the same conversations. He didn't quite know what he was going to do.

Fred Dutton was there. Fred came in while I was there and that's the time he said to me, ^{"Would"} "Will you please talk to Edelman and Walinsky and tell them what the hell the facts of life are." ^{"Where do we go from here?"}

I announce ^{where} where do the so-called power brokers go ^{and} and what my problems are going to be. It isn't just as easy as they think it is. This is not an open primary ^{where} where you ^{just} go out and run a popularity contest, and I don't think they understand that." I think he wanted to put some of the onus for his not running on us, ^{as} as someone who. . . .

Fred was ^{Brown's} [Brown's] [Edmund G.] assistant and I'd been the President's assistant, and I suppose they. . . . So we had a long chat with them.

Bobby went over ^{to} to, had to vote in the Senate and Fred and I talked to them for about an hour. Peter (Edelman) I thought had some pretty sensible-- they both wanted him to run without any question-- ^{but} but Adam (Walinsky)

wasn't interested whether he could win,
 lose, draw or climb trees of . . .
 Adam was just committed and he wasn't
 interested in conventions and they ought to
 abolish the convention and he had all the
 things that . . . We were ^{just} trying to point
 out to him that that's a great idea, but it
 just isn't going to happen between then and
 June of that year. I think we convinced
 Peter but I don't think we made any impression
 on Adam whatsoever.

HACKMAN:

Where's Dolan [Joseph F.] in this?

O'DONNELL:

He never was in, you know, he didn't come
 into the-- I think he sat down at this
 meeting now as a matter of fact with Dutton
 and I. That's the only time I ^{recall} saw Joe in ^{the}
 Joe never contributed much, you know, I don't
 think Bobby saw him in that sort of a role
 anyway.

HACKMAN:1

Was he as clearly committed as the younger
staffers were or/ . . .

O'DONNELL:

was a matter of fact
I don't think so, no. In fact I would
hesitate to say I ever heard Joe say one
year
way or the other. Maybe I'm wrong and I'm
far away [^] but I detected some friction maybe
between Dolan and the other ~~two~~ fellows
which would emanate really ~~from~~ Adam wanted
to go abolish the Ways and Means Committees [^]
and Adam wanted to -- he didn't understand
any of this frivolity [^] and I'm sure he doesn't
even yet. I talked to him about congressmen
and the difficulties of their personalities
and how you get bills through [^] and how you
never get them through and it just made no
impression on Adam. It just was a lousy system [^]
They ought to get rid of seniority [^] and they
ought to. . . . All of them, I happen to
agree with all his theories [^] but I don't think
the Consitution is going to write itself quite

the way that Adam and I might like it at the moment. But that was the last time I recall ~~he~~ he came back, and we chatted again, and the next time I talked to him was the day before the primary.

HACKMAN: Let me skip, can I skip back to one thing?

O'DONNELL: Sure.

HACKMAN: You were talking about the call from McCarthy and the New Hampshire thing was beginning. Can you remember ever talking to Robert Kennedy just before McCarthy announced or right after McCarthy announced about any of his conversations with McCarthy on what he would do if he'd later go in, what McCarthy would do and how this was all worked out.

O'DONNELL: ~~Some~~ don't think there were any. I'd say, very unfortunately, Larry, that the distortion of the views of Kennedy and McCarthy-- they're both responsible for it. First, the implication that the Kennedys hated Gene McCarthy, and specifically the President, because he had

nominated Adlai Stevenson in 1960. This was perpetrated over and over again in the minds of the press. In fact, it ^{isn't} isn't true. The President and Gene McCarthy never were soul-mates, but the President was a very practical fellow. He saw what Gene McCarthy was up to, and ^{Gene} he had as much right as he had to do it. And Gene then thought the President was going to hate him for the rest of his life. As a matter of fact, we had a trip to the West, and Gene came with us, and the President went out and campaigned for McCarthy in '62 in which I think they reached some rapport. Gene suddenly realized that the President of the United States is too busy to ^{go} run around hating Senators over ^{any} a silly thing like that. And Gene started to come around. He's a petulant fellow anyway, as we all know, and Gene dreamed up all these things that the President didn't like him. They started to really get together. ^{But} But I don't think Bobby Kennedy even knew Gene McCarthy. He may have spoken ^{once} once in his

whole life ^o and now it's because they don't
 like each other. I'm sure in the Senate
 they never spoke. Bobby was not the most
 convivial ² "hail fellow well met" ² running
 around saying hello to Gene McCarthy, and
 vice versa. I don't think there was any
 prior conversations. I know there was ² no ¹
 even the slightest ² thought ² of an agreement.
 I don't think up until the time McCarthy
 announced that Bobby Kennedy had any intention
 of running for President of the United States
 whatsoever, and I think when McCarthy got
 in there, I think everyone thought it was
 rather a futile gesture. I think he
 embarrassed Bobby because he had done the thing
 that Bobby ^{1 as} with all his coterie of supporters
 said, "You should have been the one to
 have done this instead of letting him steal
 all your thunder. He becomes the man of
 courage and you be. . . ." That irritated
 Bobby, and then the press would write it

viceversa

b

and ^{list} exacerbate ^{it} sort of irritation, and
 vice versa with McCarthy. I met Abigail
 McCarthy two weeks before the New Hampshire
 primary and she begged me to have Bobby
 Kennedy run. She said, "Gene can't do it".
 She said, "If Bobby would only run, . . ."
 And she was committed, as was young Mary [McCarthy]
 in the War, and so was Gene. I mean they
 really had an emotional honest hang-up on
 the situation. But she stood in the Mayflower
 lobby, she said, "I suppose you're ashamed to
 be seen with me." I said, "Look it, we're friends."
 And she said, "If Bobby'd only run, we'd get
 out tomorrow morning." I'd say that was
 somewhere around two weeks before the primary
 There was none of this so-called conflict at
 that time other than which is a natural Bobby
 concerned, ^{that he had} to be undone with what maybe
 he should have done, and Gene, I'm sure knowing
 he's going to get shellacked. At that moment
 I don't think Gene had the slightest conception
 and at that point really-- I kept very close

touch on the New Hampshire thing naturally
 we're very close to New Hampshire and we
 have a lot of mutual friends Bill Dunfey
 (William P.) who is our guy up there who
 really knows the game and Bill and I
 talked almost every day about the New
 Hampshire thing. His initial views were
 that McCarthy was going to take a shellacking
 although he privately supported him. I
 think the culmination of many things just
 started that last couple of weeks. Number
 one he didn't realize how unpopular Johnson
 was. It wasn't even the War so much it was that
 McCarthy was the vehicle for all the anger
 at Lyndon Johnson and it wasn't whether
 they voted for him or not they just didn't
 like him and also he wasn't even on the ballot.
 I kept trying to tell them that. Look he's
 got a name on the ballot and the other guy
 who got to write in; Nobody likes Lyndon
 Johnson enough to write his name in; if he
 was there and he's the President of the

United States, there's enough name familiarity or party loyalty, but when you ask a guy to get off that farm on a cold day to run down ^{to} and write in Lyndon Johnson, you've got a problem. Much more than the War, this was the ~~war~~ . . . Then they screwed the whole thing up. The organization got heavy-handed and McIntyre

[Handwritten: Claimed] *[Handwritten: B]* Thomas J. made that speech which boomeranged. *[Handwritten: was in a]*
[Handwritten: but in] *[Handwritten: 7]* Ennieooten mishandled the whole. . . .

They misjudged the whole tenor and they forgot that it was a write-in and the whole organization forgot ^{that it} there was a write-in. You could see Gene. . . . I'll tell you right now if I had run in New Hampshire I would've beaten Lyndon Johnson more than Gene McCarthy just because I'm a more familiar ^{AK} name to them or I'm one of them really. Gene McCarthy was not one of them and he had some anti-Kennedy aspects to his campaign. But the fact is it was just

laying there to be picked up. I talked to Bobby the next time if I can move on-- alright?

HACKMAN:

^{Yes,}
Yeah, now did you report the Abigail McCarthy conversation to Robert Kennedy, did you ever discuss this with him? How did he react to that?

O'DONNELL:

^{Yes}
Well, hurt, I think. I do think Larry that there was ^{an} and I go back to that so-called Kennedy- McCarthy thing and Bobby said that to me and I said, "Your brother didn't hate Gene McCarthy. That is made up and I don't believe you really know Gene McCarthy, Bobby. I think you're letting the press conjure up in both your minds a situation which just doesn't exist." Now, Abigail McCarthy, Gene McCarthy and I became friends in Washington we used to go over to Mary McGrory's house about once a month and Adlai Stevenson used to come over and Gene used to read his lousy poetry to us

but he was a pretty good companion, and
 we got to be reasonably friendly, and after
 he got in the vice Presidential thing,
 Gene McCarthy and I had a great discussion.
 I had opposed when Lyndon Johnson was. . . .
 He and I had a long conversation at the
 Chilean Embassy, and he said, "I understand
 you're the guy that gave me the zing."
 And I said, "You're absolutely right, but
 I told ahead of time I was for Humphrey
 if Bobby was going to be the nominee, fine
 and when Johnson said, "You have to have a
 Catholic on the ticket", I said in the presence
 of nine other guys, "If you're going to have
 a Catholic there's only one Catholic in
 the country, and that's Robert Kennedy. If
 you're just looking for a substitute and
 saying we're a bunch of cattle and run around
 and vote for people because of their religion,
 I thought we licked that in West Virginia.
 I wouldn't vote for anybody because of their
 religion, and I don't think anybody else would
 be here. And there were nine Catholics in

the room out of twelve, and all nine of them were for Hubert Humphrey." So I said, "Don't look at me, I told you a long time ago I couldn't support you, that I'd have to be for Humphrey if Bobby wasn't a candidate."

So then we got into a long conversation about what Lyndon did to him which was a pretty sordid story which is where McCarthy's anger with Johnson. . . . They'd been very friendly. And we got into the President's thing and I told him "You and the President became very good friends". He said, "Why don't the Kennedys like me". I said, "It's all a figment, why don't you sit down with Bobby some day. I don't think you ever talked to him." I think at that moment---

Ralph Dungan was going to Chile, we were in the Chilean Embassy, and I don't think at that moment that Gene McCarthy probably had ever had two conversations with Bobby Kennedy. So it was one of those misunderstandings.

I told Bobby about that, and he seemed rather taken aback. He'd heard from Joe Alsop or somebody that the President ^{didn't} . . . The President didn't like when they were ^{in the Senate together} a lot of senators don't like Gene McCarthy ^{but} it was nothing that really carried ~~over~~ the rest of his life. He was just too big for that. It didn't ^{ever} interest him. The Bobby-McCarthy thing was really an absolute figment of people's ~~imagination~~. It became worse as it went on because ^{then} there were some things that happened that ^{got} them in trouble. In ^{the} next conversation I had ^{with} ~~Bob~~ Bobby conversation with Gene McCarthy and Newsweek ran it as a matter of fact and I said, "I happen to be very friendly with him; I always have been in a social sense and I happen to agree with what he's saying so I'm not going to knock him to anybody. If I were in New Hampshire, I'd vote for him." So the day before the primary

he called me, that's our next conversation, and he said, "What do you think's going to happen". I said, "You're going to get shocked." He said, "I think you're right." He said, "I think you're right." Now the YFet offensive intervened, as I recall this was the final blow. And I think Lyndon Johnson going on television saying we just won a victory was . . . That just ended the whole . . . The credibility thing was just gone. Even the stupidest man in the world knows that . . . They've got a picture on television of a guy jumping into our embassy. It's hard to construe that as a marvelous triumph when you've won the war at tleast four hundred and twelve times in the last two years. That was just the end of it and I don't care who was up there.

It was just all over then and Bobby sensed it. McCarthy was going to damn well and anything over twenty-five percent--- I think that was what McCarthy was shooting for was

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 twenty-five percent not to be disgraced.
 That was his original, in conversations I
 had with him, just to get his point across
 and that was it. I think after the Tet
 offensive everybody suddenly saw they had
 something going here in the anti-Johnson
 vote and that's really all that it was
 an anti-Johnson vote. ^{Gene} McCarthy ran a lousy
 campaign. He really didn't come across and
 the stuff about the kids -- ^{this} it was the most
 overrated, overplayed story, they were a
 great help, but the fact is that there's
 got to be an issue, ^{here} and it was an issue.
 It was anti-Lyndon Johnson. The message
 was loud and clear. He called me the next day
 and said, "We'd better talk" and we chatted
 for about an hour, and then he said, "there's
 gonna be a meeting in New York, and I'd like
 to have you go". ^{of news} And there is another meeting,
 let me go back just once more. This one was
 with ^[Jesse Mo] Jesse Unruh and myself. I went to a
 dinner in New York, and this is just prior

to the necessity of filing in California,[^]
which I think is slightly before Bobby
announced? *he was going to be a candidate*

HACKMAN: *Yes*
Yeah, right, a week or so.

O'DONNELL: And I was at a fund-raising dinner for the
New York State Democratic Committee, and
Bobby was the featured speaker, and on the
way out we chatted for a minute, and I was
there, and my wife was with me, and Bobby
said, "Would you come to Washington".
It was
I was on my way back to Boston, *as a*
matter of fact I had to cancel a speaking
engagement, and I said, "Why". And he
said, "Well, Jesse is coming in from
California. He's your pal, and I'd like to
have you sit in on the meeting if you
would. It's out at my house." So that
afternoon we went out to Hickory Hill, and
as I recollect, it present at that meeting
was Jesse, Frank Burns was there, Ted

Sorensen--- Dutton may have been there
or may not have been. Do you have a list
who was there?

HACKMAN: I've got that somewhere. I believe Dutton
was there. Burke Marshall.

O'DONNELL: Burke Marshall, yeah.

HACKMAN: I've got Jesse Unruh, Burke Marshall,
yourself, Dutton, Senator and Mrs. Kennedy.

O'DONNELL: Yeah, well, it went into a play like--- it
was the usual running around the mulberry
bush, and Jesse had to have an answer. That
was the reason for the urgency of the meeting
in order to file a slate. I never ~~really~~
came out and said he ought to run when
we got to it. I said, "Well, I'm going to
be cold and practical about it. If you're
going to run to get back in the White House,
I don't think I'll be for you. If you feel
as strongly as I think you do about this
situation, then ^{naturally} I'll be for whatever you

want." And I turned to Jesse and I said, "Jesse, you're a practical politician. Now you know what a convention is. You know what we're talking about. What odds do you think there would be that Robert Kennedy could ~~be~~ nominated by the Democratic Party? I said, "Three to one". He said, "No, five to one, but I think he ought to run." And Jesse made a very eloquent little statement in which he said, "The character of the party has been destroyed by Lyndon Johnson. We don't have a Democratic Party anymore. It's sick; the ^ucontry's sick. Someone has to pick up the pieces even if they lose and give it some character and some integrity and some honesty, and maybe we don't get back in for four more years, but the parties in our local states are going to collapse and there just is no morality really in the Democratic Party anymore, and I for one just feel it's worth losing." Sorensen was again the devil's advocate, he was strongly against

it, and Sorensen made a statement which
 I thought was very well taken. He said,
 "Jesse, let's be all practical. You're
 interested in yourself. You want to be
 Chairman of a slate which, with Robert
 Kennedy's ~~name~~ ^{NAME} would probably win in
 California and makes you a big hero, and
 then you'll run for Governor." And Jesse
 said, " I have never been under the
 impression that any of us were virgins in
 this business, and if you think that Bob
 Kennedy doesn't think ^{about} of Bob Kennedy when
 he makes a decision, then he's not the Bob
 Kennedy I know. And if you think Jesse
 Unruh doesn't think about Jesse Unruh
 when he makes a decision, you're looking at
 the wrong Jesse Unruh." But he said, "As
 a matter ^{of fact} Mr. Sorensen, sometimes I think
 that much of your reluctance is ^{the fact} that you
 also happen to represent General Motors ^{AND} and
 you've got a good relationship with Lyndon
 Johnson, and maybe you're thinking ^{up} about your

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economic situation. Maybe you're even thinking of Ted Sorensen. Well, that was the end of that argument. Ethel came in, and Ethel said, "Well, it's all big talk." She said, "But let me ask you two, just what will you do if Bob Kennedy announces for president of the United States?" And Jess said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll resign as majority leader, speaker of the California House, because I think it would be a conflict of interest for me, and round up all those legislators and set up a slate and we'll carry California for him. And I'll devote full time from this minute on. That's how much I think of, I'm prepared to go." She turned to me and said, "What'll you do?" And I said, "I'll be in Washington the day after. I'll give him my full time and all the people I can lay my hands on. If he wants to run, win, lose or draw, we're with him. And that was about the end of the meeting. There was no. . . .

HACKMAN: ^{kid} Sorensen come back ^{at} with that. [?]

O'DONNELL: No, there was no discussion beyond that. Ethel was the strongest one at the meeting. But I think she was convinced he was going to run by then, but the decision really was to file a slate, and so they filed that blank, no name slate as a result of this conversation.

HACKMAN: Is this the point he brought the poll in from California with him when he came? I think on March 2nd. . .

O'DONNELL: Yeah

HACKMAN: . . . can you remember what kind of impact that had? Was it an impressive poll, or how Robert Kennedy would do?

O'DONNELL: Yeah, I don't think it was the effect of. . . . wasn't any I ~~don't~~ think there was question in anybody's mind that Bob Kennedy could carry California. That really wasn't the issue. If California

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(Pages are misnumbered.
There are no nos. 43, 44, 45)

hadn't had a timetable, we wouldn't be
discussing it in this context at all, but
the fact is Jesse had to have a decision
or make one on his own, and all along--
I talk to Jesse all the time, and all along
he was convinced that Bobby could win in
California and, as he ^{said} he was convinced
Bobby probably could not be nominated
although both of us had ^{an} the inclination that
this might blow and that the war going the
way it might ~~be~~ that the whole situation
might change, but as of that moment, and it
was to become conclusively clear ^{later} that
Bobby could not have been nominated at the
moment. I think he would have been nominated,
but the fact is in June of that year, after
my contacts, I'd say he was not going to be
nominated, not in June, I'd say if
Johnson had stayed in the contest. But we
broke up that one, and I went my way, Jesse
went back to California. He and I went and
had dinner, He went back to California, and

I went back to Boston. And then the
next meeting was the celebrated one in
New York when I was in the air and landed
in Philadelphia and finally got back, and
by the time I got there ^{↑ Bobby} had already
^[Walter] announced on the Cronkite Show. And that
meeting was a disaster. It was half
humorous, but then they broke up into little
groups, and Pierre and Dutton and I sat there. . . .
Now Teddy had most of his staff there
whose knowledge of national politics has
got to be minus 575,000 and the names they
start throwing around of whom they're going
to contact. You're dealing with a convention
and the fellows are coming up with this
"I know a nice fellow in Nebraska" and
somebody else knew a nice guy that he went
to Harvard with. So that it just became
^{a little} so ridiculous. And then the candidate
arrived and then went the conversation with
Mayor Daley, [Richard J.] and they didn't ever
know how to get Mayor Daley. I had to call

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my secretary who got Mayor Daley's private number, and we got the Mayor on the phone, and Bobby went in and talked to him himself, and that's when this celebrated Commission suggestion arrived. Now everybody was there of the normal group with the inclusion of Teddy's guys, and now some of Bobby's fellows with the exception of Sorensen who, *I think,* was speaking in Syracuse or someplace, *I* Bobby did speak to him on the telephone, I recollect that. Had *e*

HACKMAN: Had you ever talked about the Vietnam Commission idea with him at all before this point?

O'DONNELL: Never. After the conversation with Daley, he called me into the room and said, "I've talked to the Mayor and he's *Definitely* awfully reluctant about me running. He's looking for any way to put the Party together." And that is Mayor Daley *I* and I'd talked to Mayor Daley on several occasions, *I* socially. We're

great friends. He is such an organization man ^{really} that he just doesn't understand ^{the} that fact that you could be against the leader-- any leader-- good, bad, indifferent. It just flies in the face of his understanding of the political structure so bad. . . .

And he wants to be ^{he} he was against Vietnam more vociferously than Bob Kennedy two years before this. He and I had gone through the Vietnam thing, and he had no rapport with Lyndon Johnson ^{that} that celebrated rapport that the press writes is just baloney. He loved John Kennedy, but ~~he~~ was not crazy about Bobby Kennedy for reasons of when he was Attorney General. . . . But, anyway, Bobby said to me, "The Mayor ^{is} as you ^{had} suggested", (because I am told him ^{had} about my conversations) ^{he} he would do anything to patch up this difference between you and Lyndon Johnson. We can all win again, and then we can start fighting after we win the White House back, but let's

go win the White House back. We as Democrats. So Bobby was really taken aback ^{with} by the conversation and I don't know how the Commission emerged-- whether Daley suggested the Commission or whether it had been suggested by someone else to Bobby. I can't believe Daley mentioning a commission because he's too shrewd for that. It sounds like something that would come out of a Sorensen or a Schlesinger and Daley would buy it because he'd do anything not to have this conflict and not to be placed in the position himself to make a choice between Lyndon Johnson, to whom he has a firm commitment, and the Kennedys, that he loves, and that part of the Democratic Party that's his in his own organization. So Bobby said to me, "This is what his suggestion is". He said, "What do you think about it?" I said, "I think it's ridiculous. I know Lyndon Johnson like the back of my hand, I've lived with that man for a long, long period of time.

Firstly, he is going to laugh at it because after all we've got commissions but the commission is the National Security Council is the commission. You're just going to walk right in to the nicest trap of all time where you as a Senator are looking to set up your own government. That's the way I would look. . . . If I were Lyndon Johnson I'd love that I'd just let you in there and I'd just knock your head off. And then you do look like an arrogant young man. Well, he got very upset about that and he said, "I just want to satisfy Mayor Daley and I went every last mile and if it makes me look ridiculous to go the last mile, I'll look ridiculous but I don't. . . ." He didn't want to run and he didn't want to tear up the Democratic Party. When he had conversations with the Daleys it really shook him up because these are his friends and his brother's allies-- blood relationships almost. They shook him when they said, "Please don't shake us up, Bobby." Then they talked to

Sorensen, as I said, I was convinced ~~I~~ I knew just what Lyndon-- I knew what I would do with that one-- just exactly what Lyndon would do-- ~~USA~~ suck him in-- say it might not be a bad idea, and then you leak it out to the press, which he did, and then made Bobby look like a fresh young kid coming in trying to take over the government without being elected. I think that was one of Bobby's low moments because the people just don't like that. You've got the Secretary of State, You've got the Secretary of Defense, you got the Chiefs of Staff, you got all these guys. That's what they're there for. I don't know how that ever came about. I'll always be interested in how Sorensen ever emerged into that. . . . He happened to be there on General Motors business is my understanding from my friends in the White House, and Lyndon saw the golden opportunity. . . . He already knew about the conversation because Daley had talked to him. It's my understanding. And he

just saw this as a golden opportunity to waylay Bobby right there quick, fast ⁷/₀ And he did. Now this is about I would think on Thursday ^{he} blew that one out of the water. I talked to Bobby Thursday and Friday on the telephone, and despite the fact that on Tuesday or Wednesday we flew to New York. . . .

HACKMAN: Tuesday's the primary, Wednesday he was in New York, both Wednesday and Thursday. He flew up Wednesday, went back, flew up Thursday.

O'DONNELL: Wednesday was the meeting I attended. I came back to Boston Thursday morning. At that meeting I might add that ^{when} while the Daley thing and all the rest of it was going on ^{and} the meeting was so chaotic that Dutton, Pierre and I left and went over to Toot Shors and got stiff because it didn't look like a very auspicious beginning to the great crusade.

HACKMAN: This is the night he ^{when} talked to Cronkite, . . .

O'DONNELL: And he came in ^{now} and it's a fair accomplishment really.

HACKMAN: This is-- Thursday was the Cronkite day.

O'DONNELL: Was it? No, I don't think so. The day that we were in New York, he was on Cronkite while I was in the air because I walked in and Steve Smith said, "I don't know what the hell we're having a meeting for. The candidate just made a decision while you were flying in from Philadelphia."

HACKMAN: But that's the fourteenth ^{not believe it} and that's ^a Thursday ^o the twelfth is the primary on Tuesday. ^{The} Meeting in Steve Smith's apartment in ⁵ March O'DONNELL: 13th.

O'DONNELL: That's Wednesday. Sure. And Cronkite was on Wednesday night.

HACKMAN: You're right.

O'DONNELL: And I came back to Boston. I talked to him Thursday and to be frank with you by Thursday then the Commission thing came up ^{I believe} on Thursday ^A Thursday and Friday I got the impression he hadn't made up his mind ^o

not committed

There was some backing and filling in there, now he's having some other conversations and I said, "You've made up your mind, whether you think you've made up your mind or not. If you're going to retire from politics for the rest of your life then you could change your mind, but as far as two hundred million Americans go you've made up your mind. And rightfully there's been a hell of a lot of indecision and running around which has not helped your image very much, maybe for good reasons. You have already made a decision, you are a candidate, and I think all you ought to make your decision now on is how does it surface, that's all." So that's the last I talkéd to him, ^{It was} Friday. And Pierre called me on Friday night and said he was announcing on Saturday.

HACKMAN: Did you ever get any feeling of what conversations he was having that was making him back off at this point after he had sort of committed himself?

O'DONNELL: Yeah, I know that there are several. For example, Teddy in my judgment was against it right up to that moment. And Teddy had gone to some Congressmen and Senators and asked them to poll these people up there. One of them was [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill, ^{he said} and Tip has told me this himself ^{that he} never met one single person that would support him. And I think he delivered that message to Teddy. Bobby mentioned it to me I know that ~~much~~ that he didn't have any support in the Congress. And I said, "You never did think you did and you know what is the point?" Then, of course, the great game up there at this point was all the guys say, "Teddy's a great guy and Bobby's a son of a B...". Well, that's because they don't have to make a decision on Teddy. Teddy'll find how many of those guys are with him when he's running. But it was a great game to say that Teddy's a wonderful guy and Bobby's, . . . Because they never had to make a choice. In 1964, I said to Teddy, "You know Lyndon Johnson

is going to love you up until the day you're thirty-six, when you're constitutionally eligible. Right now you're a wonderful fellow because you couldn't run if you tried." But he got that information and I'm sure going around the Senate, knowing that crowd and the Senate, everybody's negative and everybody's saying "You're crazy; you're making a bad mistake." He just should never gone back to Washington. He should have gone and hid someplace because you'll never find anybody in that crowd, a pro that's for anybody, ^{including} even each other. ^{wants to have} The President had a great line, "If everybody had to vote for President, ^{there's} it would be ninety-six ones." ^{I won't} Because they'd all vote for each other." So I think he got a lot of flack on that Thursday and Friday in Washington. That Commission thing had boomeranged pretty badly. And I think he ^{just} wished to hell he had the Cronkite thing back. I think he ^{had} announced anyway, but I think he'd have liked to have ^{had} it back and had been able to do it in a little

different fashion. But there's no question in my mind that he was getting a lot of. . .

And I'm sure a lot of reporters ^{were} ~~are~~ telling him he's ^{was} making a mistake and Bobby's a great ^{run} guy to ~~go~~ around talking trying to get other people's ideas. Well, once you've made up your mind you don't want to hear anybody else's ideas. ^{because} Everybody just confuses you. Nobody can say you're going to be elected [^] and nobody can say you're going to be nominated. You got to go do ^{it}. But he was up until Saturday he was pretty mixed up.

HACMAN:

On that Commission idea did he ever say to you that if the Commission idea was bought by Johnson, as unlikely as that seemed to you, that he would definitely stay ~~out~~ or what conditions he'd put on the arrangement whereby he might stay out?

O'DONNELL:

No, I think [^] the wish was [^] farther [^] ~~than~~ [^] the thought there. He wanted to satisfy Mayor Daley because I thought he properly realized that if those fellows were going to be angry

with him, not just opposed to him, but angry that his chances of being nominated were nil. And I think he just wanted to go that last mile. I don't think he wanted to run. And if he could think of some reason-- if they could end the war in Vietnam, that's why he was running, then he wouldn't have run and he would have accomplished everything he wanted to do anyway. That's why he was running.

HACKMAN: You know the way the story has been written and the things that I ^{have} read is that Sorensen's proposal to President Johnson is before Daley gets into the thing. That's not your impression at all.

O'BONNELL: Well, that's not true because I got it before Sorensen had ever heard of it. Sorensen is up in Rochester.

HACKMAN: But the way it's been reported the Sorensen meeting with the President when this was first discussed was on March 10th or 11th. That's before the trip to Rochester. The

Trip to Rochester and everything is after this idea has already started, the way I've seen it.

O'DONNELL: Well, let me just put it this way. If Sorensen wants to be the father of the idea, I gather that's perfectly alright with me because it's the stupidest thing I've ever heard of in my whole goddamn life. But if he chooses to be the father of that orphan, ^{the} and that's alright with me. I can't conceive of it coming from Mayor Richard J. Daley, and it came out of a conversation that Robert Kennedy had with Mayor Daley, so it is perfectly logical that Ted Sorensen had discussed with Bobby Kennedy, that Bobby Kennedy said to Mayor Daley, "What if I did this", and Daley would say, "That's sounds like a great idea" because he didn't care what you did except he hoped you don't run against Lyndon Johnson and ~~tear~~ our Party apart. So that is perfectly conceivable.

HACKMAN: Okay, let me go back to something way before that. You^d said that that first meeting in Salinger's office in October that when it was reported in the press that Lyndon Johnson had been in something of a tizzy over this, and you^{nt} talked about that you still had some contacts in the White House. Who were you talking to in this period in the White House that would be telling you what the President was thinking[?] and how much back and forth was there. [?] =

O'DONNELL: Well, not really much as far as the President himself was concerned. The Congressional leadership is very friendly with me^o I go see [Michael G^o] Senator Mansfield everytime I go to Washington^o. I'm very friendly with a lot of those guys in a social sense, the congressmen particularly. After Moyers [Bill D^o] and those fellows left I didn't know any-- I don't know any of those new fellows in the White House. [Cliff C^o] Cliff Carter who I would meet socially and everybody's got the inside who. [James H^o] Jim Rowe who's a great pal

of mine and the law partner of my best friend
 I'd see him, and he kept me filled pretty in
 much on what the President ^{is} ~~was~~ I knew
 what the President ⁺ was doing pretty much
 at the time, not in an intimate way nor did
 anybody ever tell me anything that I shouldn't
 know but just as far as But I knew
 him so he had this thing on Bobby Kennedy
 it ^{that} was just incredible, incredible, and no
 matter how many times you told him it was
 foolish ^{even when} while I was there, you just couldn't
 shake him. Bobby Kennedy didn't believe in
 the Constitution, Bobby Kennedy was going to
 try to seize the government. He had this
 picture of Bobby Kennedy ^{which is} that was so unlike
 what Robert Kennedy is like. These two men
 just didn't know each other, and they built
 up this picture of each other ^{which is just} ~~xxxxxx~~ incredible.
 And no matter what the hell you said ^{now} ~~now~~
 here's Lyndon Johnson with me--- he and I had
 a great relationship. We had only one fight
 in our life, and that was the day I left.

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And I'm Bobby's best friend. Now I can't be that good a guy and be associated with such a monster. But he just had a . . . Dick Maguire was raising money for them, Dick is my friend, I put ^{Dick} him in as Treasurer And they would go over to a meeting to get the campaign going and they'd start a conversation and if Bobby Kennedy's name came up even by accident in the conversation the meeting was all over and he'd launch into a tirade about what a son of a B... Bobby Kennedy was. Ninety-nine percent of the things were untrue and it'd get back to Bobby Kennedy and Bobby'd say something about Lyndon Johnson. It was just this total built-up that's another one I don't think Bobby Kennedy ever had five conversations with Lyndon Johnson in his entire life. When we were in the United States Senate, Johnson wouldn't speak. . . . we were just a couple of whippersnappers. He was Majority Leader ^{thought} he felt we were a couple of kids for crying out loud. And when the President became

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President ^{it} it was just all conjured
out of whole cloth but it became true
because they made it true after awhile.
But I had always maintained-- the Vice-
President and I were extremely socially
friendly and I was pretty much in contact
with them. When the Manchester [William] book
came out, they called me and said, "would
you read" because it was a lie "would
you be prepared to refute it if the President
asked you to". I said, "Sure, sure I would.
I'm not mad at the President. I think his
policy in Vietnam stinks and I told him that
when I was in the White House so there's
nothing. . . . I'm not mad at the President
of the United States, who the hell do I think
I am, I'm a nobody. If you want on the facts
I'll be prepared to write a letter saying
what the facts are if it comes to that point."
Out of which Manchester made some changes
in the book, too. We always had a good relation-
ship. At a meeting like this, seeing my name

at that meeting would drive him right
 up a wall because he thought I was ^{apud} ~~was~~ [^]
^{even}
 the rest of them he didn't pay any
 attention to ~~to~~ but if I was there it had
 some significance. He knew Bobby's
 relationship with me. That's why I didn't
 want to go. They could all meet until they
 were blue in the face and Lyndon Johnson
 would laugh in his--- but he figures Ken
 O'Donnell is a friend of Daley's and Unruh's [^]
 and they must all be in on it or he wouldn't
 be there. Everything's a big plot to Lyndon
 anyway because he's always plotting himself
 and can't construe that we're not doing the
 same thing, but Bobby just said "would you
 sit in on the meeting. He couldn't believe
 that."

HACKMAN:

Let me skip back to something else again.
 Did you ever discuss with Robert Kennedy
 his conversations with Lowenstein [Allard K.]
 and this "Dump Johnson" movement that got
 going in the fall of '67. Do you know if
 he was proposing that anyone else challenge

Lyndon Johnson?

O'DONNELL: I would doubt it very much. Robert Kennedy talked to a lot of people-- his brother did the same thing, sometimes indiscreetly too-- but if I'm going to make you love me, then I agree with you and that's half the stories that are untrue that came out about the President. If Arthur Schlesinger said, "You ought to get rid of Rusk [Dean]" He'd say, "Arthur that's one great idea. You're the smartest guy I ever knew." And Arthur went out on cloud nine and the President said, "See you later." "you know, imagine what that dope said to me yesterday." Bobby was that way too. So if Alair Lowenstein and Alair's got some political friends in New York, and Alair Allard would be saying it to Bobby, and I'm sure Bobby would be encouraging. "Go ahead, Alair, it's a wonderful idea." I think if anybody was going to go, he was going to go. Gene McCarthy erupted out of no where. I think Bobby would agree with these his people. He was a practical politician and I'm certain

he would have discussed it with me if he had any thoughts. If anybody was going to run he was going to run.

HACKMAN: Did he ever comment to you on the kind of campaign McCarthy was running in New Hampshire and what he thought of it, particularly the kids coming in. Is this an important factor in pushing him?

O'DONNELL: No, I think see again we go back to the relationship which is ^{I think} partly because Bobby wished he'd ran ^{quite} they became ~~quite~~ critical of McCarthy's tactics and "He's a lousy campaigner" and "He's lazy as hell". Well, I mean, that got back to McCarthy too and that again begins -- the fact of the matter is it wasn't McCarthy. He did say that to me and I said, "Bobby, there is a built-in anti-Johnson vote and he's going to get it if he never shows up in New Hampshire and as far as Massachusetts goes, he's going to knock someone's head off of here. You can't beat somebody with no body. I don't know what's

a lousy campaign in New Hampshire. He is no John Kennedy, but who the hell is." But I do think it created antipathies which-- I think the wish was ^{to} farther ~~than~~ the thought there. If McCarthy had got shellacked 99 to 1 Bobb Kennedy would have said, "See I told you so. I would've got shellacked to" or "I shouldn't have run." Now when McCarthy starts to come up I think it's just human nature to say, "it's a lousy campaign." Now McCarthy interpreted that as, ^{that} "I'm trying to torpedo him" and that's what brought him into Massachusetts as sure as God grows green apples. He said, "If you want to play that game I'll play that game too."

HACKMAN: I think I read somewhere that at one point Robert Kennedy discussed with you the possibility of going into New Hampshire. Is that so? do you remember that at all?

O'DONNELL: Oh, yeah

HACKMAN: When was this?

O'DONNELL: Going in to what? Campaign for McCarthy?

HACKMAN: No, going into the New Hampshire Primary himself.

O'DONNELL: Oh, I think that was the issue. . .

HACKMAN: Early, in those early meetings.

O'DONNELL: Yeah, that's where he had to make his decision. The decision is New Hampshire. I think we all, as it went on later and obviously saw that Johnson was more vulnerable. I was always convinced Bobby Kennedy could win in New Hampshire; I was never convinced he ought to go in to New Hampshire because I don't think his victory would have meant a darn thing. They wouldn't have cared whether Bob Kennedy won. And I think that was partially his view. I think fate just propelled him into it. Everything went in the way that he had to run.

BEGIN SIDE II TAP I

HACKMAN: From what you've told me, there probably was not much thought ahead of time given to who

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was going to play what roles in the campaign. Can you remember any discussions?

O'DONNELL: You mean prior to his announcement on Saturday. There never was any discussion. After the announcement he asked me to come down to Washington, and I went down the next Monday, and we had the first meeting ^{to open} ~~opera~~ at the headquarters. I think Steve might have gone down Sunday. It just sort of fell into place. Obviously, he had to make several immediate decisions as to what he was going to do primary-wise. First, ^{the} California thing, ^{that} the decision was already made, and that gave plenty of lead time. It wasn't until June so we were not terribly concerned about California. But the next primaries we had not made a decision in Indiana ^{I'm not sure which is the first one} we had to go into several, ^{had} now Oregon, you have to go into ~~Nebraska~~ Nebraska...

HACIMAN: You had to go into Nebraska because of the time ~~the~~ announcement was made. If they would

hold on waiti

a

have waited a few more days, he could have stayed out of Nebraska, I believe. Can you remember getting involved in any discussions as to whether you go to Nebraska or not?

O'DONNELL: No, I think he realized right off the bat he had to go the primary route. The only one that we debated at all was Indiana. We had a lot of friends in Indiana, and we have a strong organizational tie in Indiana, and the only debate was we knew it was a tough, tough state. It was on that one. Wisconsin was foreclosed, and the Indiana thing we played with for two or three weeks. Now Bobby was out on the road, as I recall, most of this time, and Teddy and Steve and myself were having most of the discussions as to what we were going to do, and they were setting up the mechanics of the operation.

HACKMAN: Is Sorensen in on this to any extent or not?

O'DONNELL: Yeah. It was so quick. The decisions were on us. We didn't have many decisions to make.

Indiana is the only one we did have a decision to make in, which was really crushing upon us to do that at that time. Bobby made a statement, as I recall, that he'd go out ^{to} and help McCarthy in Wisconsin, which was not treated very tenderly by the McCarthy people who already smelled victory in Wisconsin. We had one meeting at which the campaign organization was kind of set up, but it was quite clear that he asked me to take the major states. At the primaries we could set up an organization for the primaries as we went along and then we could get people in ^{that} who would run the primaries and if I would take over the major states, Steve would handle New York and I would handle New Jersey -- ^{as} that's the first thing -- take total responsibility for New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, obviously Jesse would handle California. But that was the main -- I spent ⁹⁰ ninety percent of my time on that. We used to meet about every morning, Teddy was there a lot then, and Steve

was trying to raide dough most of the time so he wasn't there very often. Pierre had come in by then and then I had suggested Fred Dutton to travel with him who took really the role that I took with the President and then Fred would stay in touch with me as far as where they went, or those who were working with him. And they were just ^{manpower} trying to fit them in. It was a chaotic situation. I, frankly, was the only guy that had a clear assignment ⁱⁿ of the whole damn operation because everybody was crossing everybody else's wires. You had Teddy's staff in there; you had Bobby's staff in there and then you had JFK's staff in there all sort of superimposed one on the other and so it was confusing. Everybody was working as hard as they could but it's just natural that you cross lines. Teddy was dealing with Congressmen and Senators up on the Hill that I'm dealing with the local leadership and Congressmen and Senators up on the Hill and we're crossing wires everytime we turn around and I'm sure

we had the whole political system of the United States in utter chaos because they don't know who the hell they're supposed to be talking to. Obviously, the only one they know is me, it made it a little easier as far as I was concerned because they don't know anybody else, they never dealt with anybody else politically, and Bobby's fellows are all new to them, and Teddy's fellows they don't know at all so they just naturally, even when it was things that I didn't have anything to do with, they'd be calling me, and then we're trying to unravel whose talking to who about what. We had one meeting, and I'm trying to place it. I think Bobby had made the first swing, and then we went out to Hickory Hill, and we had what I think ^{is} was the only formal staff meeting we ever had ~~an~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ sort of laid down cold assignments to people and there were no titles involved, which was a cause of some concern to some of our leaders. Teddy was going to

be the campaign manager, Teddy and Steve ~~and~~
interchangeable, which was acceptable to
everybody. There's no conflict with either
of them, they're relatives and we'd all
worked with them. Beyond that trying to work
out what Pierre's doing with what Mankiewicz
[Frank] is doing and Fred Dutton clearly
had a role, and then the speechwriters and
these people, ~~were~~ pretty much the candidate
was going to deal with on his own merit.
obviously there was going to be some conflict
between Sorensen and Goodwin and Bobby's guys
who wrote and knew Bobby's style a hell of a
lot better than-- that's like fitting a glove
that's a tough one. But I didn't get into
much of that part of it myself. I'm sure that
was the candidate's headache most of the time
and of course he was on the road. But at
this one meeting we went into the T.V. aspects
of what he ought to be doing. Don Wilson was
there. He'd come in to take over the television
part of it. I think Dick (sic) Guggenheim was

there.

Hackman: Was there much disagreement on how much you'd spend on T.V., what kinds of audiences you appear before the college ^{versus} ~~vs.~~ others?

O'DONNELL: Yeah, there was a great debate which was lead by the candidate who was--- I would say, at that time ^{it} was the first time I saw Bob Kennedy become ^a the candidate, ^o up until then, he had never really run in this kind of ^{an} operation before. When he went ~~into~~ New York, it was helter-skelter at the last minute, ~~you were~~ running ^{to} in a state you don't know anybody about, and you're suddenly becoming a candidate fellow when he was a rather withdrawn, Bobby was not the extrovert--- nor was his brother ~~but~~ but he had never done it before and it's a tough transfer, tough transfer. He never really got untracked, I never thought in New York. And when you're a Senator you got ^{to take} a more measured pace where you can really plan what you're doing. Now you're in a situation where

you're running for President of the United States. He'd seen enough of it so he understood it but that's the first time I saw Bobby Kennedy withdraw and look at Bobby Kennedy which is what his brother did so magnificently and talk about himself in the third person and he was analyzing his television how he comes across and I recall he said, "I don't come across well on set affairs. I do very well with Q. and A. I don't want to get caught just going to colleges but I don't think the set format is my milieu. I'm prepared to listen to what anybody else wants to say about it, but that's just beginning. I don't think that's my strongest suit." And then they got debating the kinds of things they're going to do on television. I think he was very clear where the issues were, what he was going to do, on his own position. That day he was more concerned with getting the lines drawn rather straight between all of us so that everybody knew quite what the other

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~~Q~~
guy was doing. He was trying to make phone calls that day, I remember he called George Meany to go down and see George Meany the next day. It was decided at that meeting that I would go see Vice President Humphrey and urge him not to run which I did the next day with Jim Rowe. We went over to see the Vice President and I told him the picture as I saw it. He had not made a decision ^{at that moment} then in his own mind although it was quite ^{very} clear to me that he was a candidate. Bobby went to see Meany the next day and I gather had a very unpleasant confrontation. Then we went to work.

HACKMAN: Any problems with other people coming into your areas or did you feel that ^{you} the responsibilities that were given to you that you were really left alone to handle them on your own.

O'DONNELL: Well, I was left alone because I'm ~~not~~ that nice a fellow to get along with, ⁱⁿ in the first place but I had a pretty sizeable staff of

fellows. Now I brought down my assistant--
whose now working for Teddy-- Paul Kirk.

^[Marjane]
Marge ~~(Evans)~~ came down and there were about

seven or eight guys that had worked for me
Ivan Nestingen and Maury ^{J.} ~~(Maurice)~~ Cannell

in Ohio, ^{Jack J.} ~~(Herbert J.)~~ Jack Conway came over

from IUD ^[Industrial Union Department] with two or three fellows so I had

guys who had worked with me all the time in
these same areas, number one. Number two,

with very few exceptions the players hadn't
changed much, ^{as to} who you dealt with, and I knew

most of them one way or another. ^{It} I didn't

have any problem, ^{it} the only problem, frankly,

^{never} I had in the whole thing was in Michigan

because you've got a complex play between the
Auto Workers and the Party organization.

I was with the Auto Workers side of it, ^{after all,} as

^{We happen to be}
~~they're~~ all great personal friends. Plus

there's been ^{the} a change ^{ing} in the players out

there, ^{was for us} ~~(Jerome P.)~~ Cavanaugh as ~~farras~~ anyway

^{he was} whose a palooof mine, ^{but} the Party organization

had changed considerably and they were a little

at odds with the Auto Workers and Hubert

Humphrey had a lot of ~~friends~~^{pals} in the Auto Workers as we did so we were fighting for the same carcass all the time. Well, Sorensen had done a little work with them through other things that's the only place we got at ~~any~~^{any}— those who don't want to deal with me figure ["]well["] I'll get away from that son of a gun I'll go to Sorensen."

A Sorensen didn't have a job. This ^{was} is one of our problems. There was no specific assignment and I gather he was getting some problems with the speechwriters who wanted to write Bobby's speeches and as I say I'm sure they know Bobby better than Sorensen does. He could write them for the President but . . . Well, He didn't have a job really and if you don't have anything to do you do things maybe you shouldn't be doing. Pierre was in the same boat but Pierre is not that kind of a fellow. Pierre doesn't have much ego problem. Pierre will stick his nose into anything and you know he's got a great personality and nobody gets mad at

Pierre and Pierre's not trying to upstage anybody. He's just going to take care of Pierre and he loved Bobby and. . . .

Ted [Sorensen] got at odds, he didn't quite know what the hell to do. Dick Goodwin was giving him a little zing. He didn't want to get into the primaries and I suppose you don't want to be downgraded to some degree, I don't know. It ^{never} ~~don't~~ bother ^{ed} me much but I gather it kind of bothered him because he and Larry O'Brien came aboard, ^{then} and he and Larry O'Brien wanted to have titles, which was not quite permissible with the rest of the fellows in the group. There was a big tussle about the title situation which it finally turned out-- O'Brien announced himself and I stopped it, and then Sorensen, I found out Sorensen had urged O'Brien to do it because he wanted to get a title, and he went to Steve and Steve said, "If you get a title O'Donnell will home, and he doesn't want a title." and I said, "What the hell do you need titles for? [?] you know everybody. You had a title, you were

Assistant to the President of the United States. There's no better title than that in the history of the world. ^{You don't need any} You needed it in 1960 because they don't know who you are and you've got to identify yourself. You don't ^{need to} do that anymore." It just causes controversy within the group. Let Teddy and Steve have the titles whose going to get mad at them, [?] they're the candidate's brother." So that resolved itself. ^{In} My operation I had no problems ^{after that} We had one little tussle about Michigan and that was the only one.

HACKMAN: You mentioned Robert Kennedy's early meeting with Meany. Did you have the labor side as something to go along with the main states? Can you recall your early conversations with Reuther [?] [Walter] and some of the other labor people, any progress at all on that side?

O'DONNELL: Labor's like anything else [?] there's so many facets to it. They were so committed to Johnson and then to Humphrey [?] the fact of the matter is I had been called to Washington maybe six

months before, ^W maybe even a year before, at
 the request of Mr. Meany, and I sat down
 with Al Barkin ^A and he said, "I'm speaking
 for the old man. ^T You've got to get Bobby
 out of this. ^{We} YOU can't tear this Party apart.
 It's got nothing to do with Lyndon Johnson."
 The same way Dick Daley, "We're going to be
 in trouble. The labor movement's going to
 be in trouble, and you're our friend, and you're
 Bobby's friend. You've got to go to Bobby and. . ."

Sp I told All-- they had a lot of polls that
 they had taken that showed Johnson in ~~both~~
 better shape than I thought he was or he
 turned out to be. They were just as puzzled
^{with} on the polls themselves, but their polls
 indicated that Johnson could be elected, and
 the ^{thing} only they were worried about is the
 tearing up of the Party. I said, "I can't do
 that. I won't do that, _o in the first place,
 Bobby Kennedy and I, we're friends, but I
 don't tell him what to do and, frankly, he
 doesn't tell me what to do. We're friends, and
 that's it, _o and I'm out of this business now.

I'm back in Massachusetts minding my own business. I'm not going to carry any messages to anybody." So they got very angry about it and this is part of the reason at the end of it that they were so bitter and they committed themselves to Johnson so whole hog. ^{Now} ~~as~~ you recall the Friday before Johnson pulled out Meany had him over there at the AFL-CIO that's why he got sore. They lead him right down the pipe ^K too. He ^{even} made a speech for Lyndon Johnson that no organized labor group has ever made for anyone else prior to their convention. That's almost illegal under their constitution. This didn't apply to Walter Reuther at all. Reuther's problem was totally different. Reuther's problem was, in the first place wherever George Meany went ^{tu?} Walter was sure not to follow and vice versa, but his friendship with Bobby was pretty deep, with the President ^{it was} very deep, and all the leadership with me very deep but they have a problem within their own union. Strangely enough some of their locals

were supporting George Wallace in their Southern areas, and they, being a very democratic union, Walter Reuther does not announce what the United Auto Workers are going to do. And I have no question in the world that they were going to be for Robert Kennedy. They had some very strong hawk sentiment amongst their locals who, I suppose, got defense contracts after the President got out. I think if Johnson had stayed in, they would have been clearly for Kennedy, but once it became Humphrey, there's some deep, deep friendships that Hubert Humphrey had with these people. So they were not able to if they had said "Look, we're going to be for you" they could not have produced at that period of time.

Walter Reuther and I had a long conversation, and I said, "I don't think you ought to come out for Bobby Kennedy. I'm not asking you to come out." And he was very, very relieved. You work within the union, I know where you are, and when the chips come down, we're going to ask you to do something, but we want to

work with your locals the way we always worked with them." For example, they ran Indiana for us. They knocked off the AFL-CIO endorsement in Indianapolis, Ray Bennett that's what we dealt with through ~~Herbert J.~~ Jack Conway. We could use these guys where they emerged locally, and Walter Reuther could deny them he didn't have anything to do with it. What the Indiana locals do id none of the business of Detroit. As long as he didn't announce himself, well, then it would caucus SOME OF THOSE FELLOWS, and Conway could do all the maneuvering. So we did beautifully with the Auto Workers and whoever they could ally themselves with we could pull them over. And in the states that I was operating in, besides the labor part of it, they had very strong positions within the Democratic organization; they had a lot of delegates. The only fellows that gave us a hell of a lot of trouble were the Steel Workers and the Steel Workers are good. If I.W. Able says "I'm against you" it wouldn't mean anything to me in a lot of unions, but when the Steel Workers

say they're against you-- first, they're well-organized, they've got a lot of money and they have these big locals in strategic places as the Auto Workers do. The Auto Workers and the Steel Workers together are formidable and separate-- you've got a tough time with the Steel Workers. They gave us fits. There's just no way of getting at (A.I.W.) Able, some of it was personal going back to the . . . first place David McDonald might have been a friend of the Kennedys. He was not a friend of Bob Kennedy's; he was a friend of Mr. Kennedy. [Joseph P., SR.] I think Able allowed that to color his judgement and also the fact of the McClellan Committee. He had a lot of excuses for why they weren't for Bobby Kennedy. Well, you know, George Meany used that excuse. I said to his pals, "He didn't need that against Jack Kennedy. He was on the McClellan Committee; Bobby just worked for them." John Kennedy was on the McClellan Committee and I never saw Meany turn down an invitation to anything John Kennedy ever gave him in his life.

So you're just making up stories why you're
 against. . . . ^{him} [Joseph D.] Joe Keenan, well,
 Joe loves the Kennedys, great pal of mine.
 Joe almost cried, but they put it on him like
 they've never put it on him before in their
 life. Now I know an awful lot of guys in the
 political apparatus of these unions, and they'd
 call me up and they were almost in tears. They
 wanted to be for Bobby Kennedy. First, they didn't
 think Hubert (Humphrey) could win; they hate
 Lyndon Johnson, and they always had a pretty
 good working relationship with the Kennedys
 but they're on payrolls, and this is the first
 time in history these people really put the
 squeeze on them. Usually there's a lot of
 latitude in there from top to bottom, but there
 wasn't in this one. They really were rough.
 But we worked on them as best we could. We did
 fairly well locally with them. The only place
 they really had any great strength was in
 Indiana where we had probably the best union.
 The Steel Workers gave us fits up in the northern
 part of the state, but the UAW neutralized them

in Indiana but other places: California
 I'm sure they-- but Jesse was able to pull
 some people off in California and the Auto
 Workers got a big local in there, and the
 Teamsters were not unfriendly strangely
 enough. Ina Mabe was friendly to Bob Kennedy.
 So in California, we were able to sort of
 neutralize it and get some pretty good labor
 guys on our slate, but they were really hurting
 us in where I was, which is the big states.

HACKMAN:

Did Conway work on this all the way through.

O'DONNELL:

Yeah. But then he went-- probably the ablest
 guy I've met in this business in my life;
 Jack Conway, and he and I talked every day, and
 I asked him to go to California because Steve
 was trying to run it and Jesse is a problem
 and there's ^{there other} guys knocking ~~him~~ ^{it} and it's at best
 the worst situation in the world. Jesse gets
 along with Jack Conway, and Jack Conway gets
 along with Steve, so he's ^{was} a godsend in these
 sort of areas, but he kept me up to date on

[continued on 92A]

every labor thing. Bill Dodds, whose
 Walter Reuther's assistant taken Jack's job
 Bill Dodds worked with me and their regional
 meetings I went to. They give you a pretty
 good feel of what's going on. They saved
 us from utter elimination. I can really say
 that because they were able to neutralize
 enough guys in some places to at least get
 us not being anti-labor.

HACKMAN: Is there anybody in Meany's family that you
 can talk to at all [Andrew J] Biemiller or
 (Al) Barkan or any of these people who can
 at least tell you what's going on there or
 is the thing so closed that there's no sense
 even talking to these people as things develop?

O'DONNELL: You mean during this campaign? Well, Al Barkan
 and I were great friends. I think he'd be the
 first to say I got him his job because when
 [James L.] Jim McDevitt died they were ^{tried--} trying
 to give-- because he was Jewish, to be frank with
 you-- ^{to} give him the business, and the President
 called George Meany and said, "I'd hate to think

that the great union never lets anything like
 that stand. Al Barkan's been my friend for
 ten years, and I love to work with him and
 he's going to have a lot of influence over
 here with Ken O'Donnell. " . . ." And that just
 went through just like that. There wasn't
 any question in my mind, Al's too liberal and
 there was some forces in there that were
 trying to-- it had been an Irish Catholic
 fiefdom, let's say, for a long time, and they
~~were not about to--~~ a lot of the building
 trades didn't want to give it up, but Meany just
 stepped in and put his foot down, ^{but} when the
 President did get in it, He was just being nice
 and subtle about it, but he made it quite clear
 that he'd like to see his friend Al Barkan.
 So when I ran for Governor, they were very nice
 to ^{me} be although they were supporting my opponent.
 So we had a great relationship. ⁺ Joe Keenan and
 I had ^{ve} a great relationship. Gus Tyler flew
 down to New York and had dinner with me one night.
 They all told me just what ^{their} they're problems were.

They had commitments, and George Meany was rough. George Meany had never done this before. I.W. Able ^{was} is rough; ^{was} he's rough on his locals who tend to be every friendly with us and whose leadership ^{was} is. . . . Their COPE ^[Committee on Political Education] leader [^] [James Cuff] Jimmy O'Brien, was a great, grwat pal, and poor Jimmy is around there having to campaign against Bob Kennedy. He almost died ^o but it's either that or you don't collect the check next week, fellows. That's just how rough they got on these guys.

HACKMAN: Is there anything Robert Kennedy ^{could} can do personally about this. Do you call him to make any phone calls back to these people or not?

O'DONNELL: Well, Teddy called a lot of these guys. I gave Bobby lists of guys to call. Walter Burke ^{who's} the Secretary Treasurer of the Steel Workers. Walter Burke had been one of the fellows we got in Wisconsin and worked like a son of a gun for Bob Kennedy. Bob Kennedy and I were in his house on a couple of occasions, and we finally

got him to come over with us out there.

And when the McClellan Committee was hot,

and Bobby called him; he called Maloney, who's the number two guy. I gave him a list of names

that Conway used to send me all the time and say, "These are the guys that a call from

Bob Kennedy will weaken it. They're still going to be for Hubert Humphrey, but they're not

going to be out knocking your head off because they like the Kennedys." And then I could follow

up with a phone call, but he had to break the ice and Ted called a lot of them. We kept the

pressure on them as best we could and just to keep the line^s of communication open, which was

really all I was ~~doing~~^{saying} which was saying "Look, we're going to get nominated anyway, and we want

you with us after the nomination." Of course, they^d got mad as a son of a gun, but that was the line

I used on them all the time. I think we maintained communication with the exception of Meany and

Able.

HACKMAN: Okay. You were talking about the California situation. When did you first begin to get reports that things weren't working so well organizationally out there-- the Unruh. . . .

O'DONNELL: Well, I kept very close to California because in California in 1960 we had screwed it up so bad you can't believe it, and we proceeded on the same lines this time. Jesse Unruh resented so much bringing in fellows from outside the state who didn't know anything about California and I've always thought that's the error of the year. I've been against it, and it just doesn't work, and it doesn't work in a big state like California, they don't want ^{a lot of} all the guys from Massachusetts out there. Look, we don't do so well back here let alone going out and exporting our marvelous talent out there. But Jesse resents it terribly.

-- well, [John]

HACKMAN: People like Nolan was out early, I believe, and ^[Charles S.] Chuck Spalding. Is this the type of person you're talking about or somebody much higher

than this.

O'DONNELL:

No, these are the ^{type} kinds of people I'm talking about. Now you take Ken O'Donnell, I think I know something about politics and if I went out to Los Angeles, I couldn't find Los Angeles for six months. You know, this ^{is} just is not the name of the ball game. And ~~the~~ intial thought of it is to have somebody there that is not invèlved in the local politics. Well, when you've got the Speaker of the California House as the Chairman of your delegation, There is nobody that's not involved in local politics. There are those that are going to be against ^{him} them and you're trying to placate them. That's something that Steve Smith can do, but to have some fellow that's a representative ^{from} of East Boston out trying to tell you how to run California. We lost it last time. I have not one slight question, we lost by 35,000 votes, everybody that didn't like Jesse Unruh went to ^{Bob} Kennedy, and I'm talking about the Tom Bradens and these fellows.

They go to Bob Kennedy, and they say, "Jesse is a mug. (Edmund G.) Pat Brown says Jesse is a mug." The first thing a politician learns is "Divide and Conquer". If I have to deal with one guy I'm in trouble, and so right off the bat you'd see stories everyday in the press about Jesse Unruh is not well-liked here, he's not well-liked there. Well, who hasn't got any enemies, but I mean you'd better depend on Jesse Unruh to do the job or you're just not going to go anywhere. You've got to have one good strong guy, and to have a couple nice guys named Joe never does you any good. Well, this is a constant running battle. When Jesse went in there, this is his premise he said, "I'm going to run the show now, and I don't want a bunch of nitwits running out here, and I don't want you playing with my enemies because you're just building them up, and I intend to run at some point for public office. I'm not being shy about it. I don't want you around playing with my enemies." We were able through Jack Conway, again, to put

together the one weak place Jesse had had had¹ been organized labor on the left. On the right they hate him because they can't get legislation through¹ but they're not much in California² but the left¹ and by that I mean the Auto Workers themselves and their~~re~~ allies¹ the Retail Clerks and these people are strong good, honest, tough unions. Well¹ Paul Schrade got on the slate. Jesse and Paul Schrade were been enemies in 1960. They became pals. So we put together that. Jesse has strong Mexican leadership; the Auto Workers have very¹ strong Mexican--
Cesar Chavez and these people. Jesse has strong negro leadership. That's his ballywick. And the UAW has strong-- they were in the same areas very, very strong² so once they got together¹ it was pretty good. Then you got to keep Jesse happy¹ which means you talk to him every day because everyday another guy flew in from Boston who told you how to run California¹ which irritates a lot of fellows in politics. This is the only thing that went wrong in California.

Steve went out there on a full-time basis, and Jesse likes Steve, and Steve's got some sense. Steve saw what the problem was, and Steve and I used to talk about it. Every time Jesse would call me, I'd call Steve and say, "Let's play the game. You got to be with somebody. Jesse wants to be told from the top. You're the candidate's brother-in-law. I'm his friend. But as long as he knows that after it's all over, you know he did it that's all he wants. He doesn't want ^{one} ~~somebody~~ else coming in and he doesn't want his own organization being disrupted."

^{TP} I think we sorted that one out, and I would ^{say} Steve played a major, major role because he does have that kind of a quality, and they know that Steve doesn't want anything. What the hell does Steve want? And Jesse was willing to play along, and Steve played with Jesse and placated him and made him happy, and when Jesse had a legitimate beef, Steve would straighten it out. Then Conway went out there and spent two or three weeks, and

Conway is the kind of guy that takes orders from Jesse. He doesn't have to be ^a the leader. "Jesse, what do you want me to do?" And that ^{this time} made Jesse happy. So I think we straightened the lines out pretty good. ^{out there}

HACKMAN:

What about people like ^(Frank) well, Mankiewicz was out there and [John] Seigenthaler. Are these people who upset Unruh or are these people who ^{were} ~~are~~ working closely enough under Smith so that they don't create problems?

O'DONNELL:

Well, I would think you ^{would} have to say Mankiewicz created problems because he's a local guy, number one, and I know he created problems, and then Fred Dutton created problems because they're Californians, and they're calling their friends to find out how things are going. That ends up in the newspaper in about fifteen minutes. That they really don't trust Unruh, the real deal is to play ^{the} ~~this~~ guys with the candidate, and he called a guy ^{...} well this is what would irritate Jesse. ^{It might be} The innocent stuff. John

Seigenthaler is smart enough and has been around enough, and John doesn't want anything either that he doesn't disrupt your ball game. But Californians do disrupt your ball game mainly because they've ancient problems. I had a big argument, as a matter fact, and Steve Smith, as a result of ^{our} a conversation, called Mankiewicz and Dutton and rest of them in and all of the crowd up there and said, "Look at it, if anybody here knocks Jesse Unruh, you're fired on the spot." I [?] called ^{said} Steve ^{up} and ^{ey} said, "This is just what you've got to do, that's all that's going to satisfy Jesse. If they want Bob Kennedy to win, they shouldn't be saying anything about each other anyway. They can say that after he's President of the United States, they can knock each others brains out, but as of right now you just got to lay the law down. Anybody that's knocking anybody working for Bob Kennedy gets fired." And he did. And that satisfied Jesse, and we ^{never} ~~had~~ had any problems after that.

But, for example, they're on a plane going out to California, and Mankiewicz and Dutton are telling

what Jesse's problems are. He isn't liked by
this guy, he isn't liked by that guy. Well,
that became a column. Mary McGrory wrote it
the next day. Well, I happened to have a guy
on the plane that heard the conversation, so
that's what Dutton was about. I called and
said, "Look it, it's Mankiewicz and it's Dutton
and I know they don't mean it, but if they're
working for Bob Kennedy, they ought to shut
their damn mouths. ^{IF} We're going to live or die
with Jesse Unruh in California, ^{you ought to just hold an} After that it
was no problem. ^{an}

HACKMAN:

Going back to the period when you were talking
about what ^{primaries} problems to go into, can you
remember considering Ohio or Pennsylvania at all,
getting in those preference primaries?

O'DONNELL:

No. They made no sense, ^{because} they didn't get you any
delegates in the first place. I think Pennsylvania
was closed. Ohio had such a primary situation
that you just couldn't do it. We had not the time

or any possibilities. We discussed one state, new Jersey, which there was a possibility of filing slates of delegates, and they have a state-wide preference, but it's not binding, and Ted Kennedy wanted to do it. But was violently against it. We didn't do it. McCarthy filed some slates and won some delegates. None of the big states--- we just hung our hat on California.

HACKMAN:

Had you done any checking with any of the political people in New Jersey, [John V.] Mayor Kenny or any of them ^{an} down the line?

O'DONNELL:

I checked with all of them. I spent three or four days with the Governor [Richard J. Hughes], and I saw Mr. Kenny upon half a dozen occasions and [David T.] Mr. Wilentz. I spent a lot of time in New Jersey. We had an agreement with the organization. Firstly, that we would not run in the primary, which they appreciated very much, and secondly, that we would help them in some places they were running ^{against} (as) McCarthy delegates that we had people in there, which we did, we had a lot of people in New Jersey. --

and
that we'd be prepared to suggest that they support the organization candidate, and we'd take our chances with them when the chips come down. And in the final agreement with the Governor, ~~the Governor~~ grateful, the Governor said that, "As soon as the California primary is over, I am calling a meeting of all of the delegation and Bobby can come in and address them. They can come out here to the Mansion and stay as long as you want. I'll do the same thing for Humphrey, but he ^[RFK] gets first crack at them." We would have got New Jersey. We had ~~New~~ Jersey.

FAIRBANKS:

What about Pennsylvania? I know you talked to [James H. J.] Tate and [Joseph M.] Barr and William Allen and everybody.

O'DONNELL:

Well, we had a hell of a fight in Pennsylvania. I talked to Tate the day after Johnson withdrew. Tate was mad at Bob Kennedy and Ted Kennedy because when he was running for Mayor, he asked them to come in and campaign for him, and they both refused and they allegedly, some one of the

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Kennedys said, "He's going to get licked, so therefore..." Now Tate told me this himself. He and I are great friends. He said, "That's the last thing in the world when a guy says, 'I'm not going to go in there. He's going to get licked.' I wouldn't have been asking if I was going to win, I was like that and that's why I needed him. I don't need him if I'm going to win. I wouldn't have called. That's not the way his brother used to do it." And then he had labor problems, Tate. Tate is a very particular fellow anyway. The day Bobby was up there—I went up to see Tate before Bobby came up to speak—and he couldn't have been friendlier. I have not made any commitments. I'm committed to Johnson and Johnson withdrew. And he said, "I don't have a commitment now." As a matter of fact, he placed the call to Matt McCloskey in his office, and I talked to Matt on the phone, and Matt said, "I don't think Bobby had any trouble now. We're all set." He ended up voting

for Humphrey, I might add. I talked to Joe Barr, and Joe Barr said, "I have a commitment to Johnson, firm. I wouldn't break it under any circumstances whatsoever." Now Johnson was then a candidate.

When I talked to ^{him after} ~~Matthew~~, Johnson was a candidate,

and he said, "I'm uncommitted. I have made no decision whatsoever. You know where my sympathies lie, but I got problems." So I talked to all of them in Pennsylvania. Then the Humphrey people made a decision that they had to lock up. We were making serious inroads in these delegations, and they were frightened stiff because they think we have some magical solution, which is a lot of malarkey, that Bobby was going to win the primaries. All I ever said to these guys, I said, "Look, I don't want any commitments from you because if Bobby gets beaten, I don't want you to be for him. You're not going to be for him. I don't want you to be in a position where you've got to break a commitment to me. At the end of the California primary, I'm going to come back."

and the candidate's coming back⁵ too⁵ and
then we're going to ask you for a commitment⁵
but not until after the primary is over.
All we ask of you is don't get committed to
anybody that you're going to have to break
your word to him at some point." That was very
satisfactory to them because they had the best
of all worlds with that line of reasoning.
Humphrey saw that⁵ too. So they decided ~~that~~^{they're}
got to crack this commitment thing wide open^o
so that precipitated the crash program in
Pennsylvania. Able^o was the chief mover in this
for them. ^{(?) I} they called a caucus^o now I was tipped
off at every single move they made because the
Chairman of the Ohio State Committee was for
us, Pete O'Grady⁵ and Pete had links into the
Pennsylvania delegates. SO^o I knew every move
they were making in Pennsylvania⁵ and I had the
signal when they had the signal. This is where
they're going to make their move. So we had about
ten guys working in Pennsylvania^o Ben Smith,
Jim Smith, Dave Mazzone, Charlie Glynn. We had
done a lot of work with them on an individual

basis, we talked to all the delegates so
 that when the crunch came. . . . Teddy
 talked to every one of them. Teddy went up
 to speak at their meeting at the Democratic
 State Committee. Their position was --- Able
 was standing around then--- their position
 was that it didn't mean anything. Now we were
 taking a psychological gambit on the thing,
 number one, you got the President, you've got
 George Meany, and you've got the Steel Workers
 in Pennsylvania, they've got Joe Barr right
 by the ears, and Joe is in tears. He did not
 want to make a commitment. Tate was impossible.
 Once he's got his back up, you can't move him
 anyway, and he saw a chance to embarrass Bill
 Green, if you want my opinion, because Bill was
 going to be the only delegate for Kennedy. We
 went up there, and I got Joe Barr, and Joe Barr
 and Teddy and I sat down, and then I sat down
 with Joe and his wife and myself, and we drank
 all night long, and I couldn't shake him, ^{he} it just
 kept saying, "it's not a commitment. We're just

saying as of right now, and he said that's what I'm going to say. I said, "That's what I'm going to say that you said to me." "As of right now." He said, "That's all I'm saying, as of right now, this is what the delegation would do, but it isn't right now and as of California, we may change our mind and go somewhere else, and you got say that." Our line coming out, Able was awful; Jesus he was rough! He practically punched Milton Schapp and I'm standing there, and he wouldn't speak to me, and I've known him for a long-- he wouldn't speak to me. Al Barkan was running away from me but they really gave it to these guys. [Robert P.] Bob Casey, Teddy talked to Bob Casey. He had gone up and spoken for Bob Casey, and I got some contributions for Bob Casey when he was running for Governor last time. First he said yes, and then Able called him and said, "You ever want to run for Governor in Pennsylvania, pal, you'd better vote for Humphrey. You can turn around and vote for Kennedy in August if you

want but as of right now you're going to
 vote for Humphrey or you're through." He told
 Milt Schapp while I was standing there, "You'll
 never run for office in this state ^{again} as long
 as you live." ^{Well,} ~~while~~ we were just saying, "Vote
 uncommitted". ^{Well,} we got the McCarthy people
 and we formed an alliance with the McCarthy
 people. They were damn good people and we
 put them in tight together. Very interesting
 point. We're going into the meeting. We had a
 meeting that morning with -- McCarthy had
 about seventeen or eighteen delegates. ^{as I recall}

HACKMAN: This is Edward Kennedy and yourself.

O'DONNELL: No, he was not there then. He'd gone back to
 Washington. The night before he'd talked to them
 and this day he was calling but they're now
 going into caucus and we had the McCarthy people
 there with us and we said, "Look it you guys
 can take the leadership. We don't care what
 you do but don't vote for McCarthy just vote
 uncommitted. We know you're McCarthy people"

just join ^{ed} together with our group ["] and
 what few we had ^s which were not very many ^s
 were prepared to go along with us. They were
 very reasonable. ~~but~~ ^{they} were an awful good group
 of guys and we got them all lined up ~~and~~ I
 walked out the door ^s and I was standing in the
 Corridor about ~~the~~ hour before the meeting ^s and
 we had a joint press conference ~~myself and~~
~~the head of the McCarthy group,~~ myself and
 the head of the McCarthy group ^{-- his} whose name
 [Michael ~~H~~ Malin ^s was ~~Malin~~ I think ^s but anyway ^s he came over to
 me and said, "I have to talk to you for a
 minute. I got to renege on the promise." He had
 just gotten a call from Tom Finney ^{s as I gathered} who had
 gotten a call from Gene McCarthy who had gotten
 a call from Clark Clifford. I gather that was this is
 sequence of it ^s which always proved to me that
 Tom Finney was working for Lyndon Johnson and
 not against Bobby Kennedy as ^{Tody} everyone ^s else was.
 I talked him out of it anyway. He was almost
 crying ^s this guy. This was his boss he got the

call from as far as he knew. He clearly told him it was from Gene McCarthy, and they were all upset, so finally it reached the point where he couldn't get all his guys to go along with him, so he decided he'd better go along with us, and they didn't do it anyway. But that was the clearest signal that we had right off the bat of what Tom Finney was doing. So anyway they went in, ^{stands} oh, we had a hell of a time with them, but they rammed it through anyway. But actually they didn't do very well because a lot of guys stayed home. If you added the thing up, but the press was very bad. Our psychological thing was they were trying to get the unit rule, which we defeated. The fact is you couldn't have it, ^{it's} it's illegal under Pennsylvania law but none of the reporters knew that. That's what I told them, "we won a great victory because we defeated the unit rule, ^{measure that} They tried to impose it on them, and they all buy it, they don't bother to check the constitution. Only about ⁵⁰ fifty or ⁶⁰ sixty percent of the delegates even showed up.

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Most of them were scared. They'd like to be
for Kennedy, but they're not about to. . . .

All the delegates I talked to were turning
the same thing. I said, "What good is it to you.
You're just crazy. You're going to get us mad.
You're going to be for us in August anyway
because Bobby's going to win all the primaries.
Why go through this routine now." They thought
about that through the evening and in the
morning they all had the story all lined up.

(Joseph J.) Joe-Joe Lawler and all these old
Kennedy guys say, "Lookit, Kenny, you're
absolutely right. It doesn't mean a goddamn
thing. We're just going to go in there ^{in this} and it's
fake. We'll give them a vote today ^{looks} and in
August it'll be a different ball game. You're
absolutely right, this means nothing." It didn't
mean anything but it did give them a good story
in the newspaper. They came out of that with
Bobby was all upset about it. I said, "We'll
get them back. We'll get them back if you win

in California ^{be} cause they only want to win ^s
 and nobody thinks Hubert can win." But anyway ^s
 now they start the same thing in Ohio ^{so} we
 moved ^{first} in Ohio. We caused the delegation.
 We had some pretty good strength in Ohio.
 We had the Auto Workers ^{and} you see ^s there's ^{no}
 Auto Workers in Pennsylvania ^s that's where they
 killed us because the Steel Workers can kill
 you ^{and} they run the AFL-CIO ^s and there's only
 one Auto Worker local ^s and we got him. But now
 Ohio, we have ^{we got some strength} ~~some strength~~ ^s. We have the Auto
 Workers ^s and the Auto Workers got a lot of members
 in the Ohio area ^{so} we ^{had} ~~have~~ called a meeting
 down in Columbus that Bobby came to. After
 Pennsylvania ^s I said, "I'll be frank with you.
 There's no better friends ~~that~~ I've got than
 Joe Barr ^{but} ~~and~~ I can't move them. You know the fact
 is they don't even know you. They never met you
 in their life ^{they hear} ~~and~~ all the stuff about the
 ruthless ^s arrogant Bobby Kennedy who is a great
 Democratic leader and who whipped people around ~~---~~
 He never met any of them. They think Teddy's

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a good fellow and they think I'm a good fellow but I'm not going to be President and Teddy's not going to be President. You're going to be President and there's no substitute for you meeting them. Now we can wait a little while but Ohio we must stop right now. The New Jersey people are starting to shake and they're all related to one another and they slip across those borders together pretty good."

So we set up a meeting in Columbus that he flew into and was about three hours late and I must have called him nineteen times. I said, "Bobby, I know you're getting great crowds and I don't know how many times I've tried to impress on you it doesn't impress one single delegate. You're begging them to vote for you. They don't care how many crowds you get. They want to know ~~if~~ *whether* you can win the election and what kind of a guy you are and as of right now they don't like you and don't be late because they think they're 'King for a Day' now for god's sake arrive on time." And I called Dutton twenty-five times.

Well, we have the meeting down in Columbus,
 and I talked to Bobby the day before again,
 "Please get here on time if you have to cancel
 anything else in the world. You're talking
 to ^a ~~one~~ hundred ^{and} forty-five delegates." So
 the meeting ^{and} there's a little drinking going
 on at the meeting ^{Then} and I get up and gave a
 speech ^{and} Bobby's arrived right on time. He's
 proud as a peacock. He called up and said, "I'm
 here. ^{as} I'm five minutes early." Jesus, the mayor
 was ^{... Wonderful!} everybody was ^{right} right on time. Well, we
 sat there ^{and} we sat there ^{and} the delegates--
 I have to shut the bar off three times because
 I figure by the time he gets here they're all
 going to be drunk ^{I have} and we've wasted out time
and they're getting madder by the minute.
 But they stayed ^{which} which is a very ^{very} interesting
 sign. I made seven speeches. I don't know
 what I said yet ^{but} but I kept going up every five
 minutes ^{to} and say, "He'll be here in a few minutes
 and let me tell you a story about the time we
 went to Paris ^I I don't know what I said ^{but} but they ^{were} ~~te~~

pretty good. And he arrived. They're sullen but not mutinous. So he finally got in there. He got this fantastic crowd. ^{[About 50] e} Bart Porter, ^{who was} the chairman from Cleveland was with him and he said, "I've never seen anything like it in my life. They almost all got killed."

HACKMAN: This is the motorcade. He'd come in in the motorcade.

O'DONNELL: Yeah, and they came through the black section of town and I guess it was something else. You could hear ^{them} him for an hour. But anyway, they're mad but not-- they kind of like big crowds too. It had a little draw for them. So he came in nobody knows him. They don't know Bobby Kennedy. They never met Bobby Kennedy in their whole life. The Governor might know him and the Senator might know him but they all knew Jack Kennedy. He shook hands with every one of them fifteen times and this is part of why they're mad. So he got up to speak and he gave them my line. "I'm not here to get a commitment from you."

And I didn't tell him either--I never said
one word to him. He made the best damn speech
I've ever heard in my life to delegates, ^{--- a} hard-
bitten, tough ^{crowd of} guys, and they were so taken
aback that he didn't come on strong and that they
heard all this bad reputation ^{and} here's this nice
looking young fellow gets up and says, "Look, if
I were you fellows, I'd be doing just what you're
doing. I'd stay uncommitted. Bob Kennedy may go
out to California and get murdered ^{and I don't} and I wouldn't
want your vote. If I can't be elected President
of the United States, I don't want you to vote
for me, and if I can't win in California, I can't
be elected President of the United States. All
I'm here for is just to ask you ^{would you} please wait
and give me a chance to talk to each one of you
individually and tell you what I'm going to do
if I'm President and the things I want to do
I'm and organization guy regardless of what you've
been reading in the paper." And they loved it;
they loved it. He changed that. So now we had

each delegation meet in a separate room^Δ by county^Δ and he spoke individually to every one of them. They stayed till ³ three or ⁴ four o'clock in the morning^Δ and nobody left. They were waiting around. He'd go in one room for fifteen-- that's when I knew he was home^Δ they'd wait around and wait around^Δ and they weren't complaining. They complain about what day today is usually. They stayed^Δ and he talked to them^Δ and he did a hell of a job ~~with~~ ^{he} them. Individually^Δ ^{with} shook hands^Δ every one of them and discussed the issues with them and the labor stuff with them. They asked questions^Δ and he was as patient as. . . .

^Δ And the next morning we had breakfast with them^Δ and there^Δ ^{was} no questions^Δ. There'd be no commitment from the Ohio delegation. Of course^Δ the key to Ohio that they were all concerned about is ^{Cuyahoga} ~~Cayuga~~^Δ.

So the next morning I got the Chairman of the ^{Cuyahoga} ~~Cayuga~~ ^{Best Posters} Reporter whose ^{is} a tough guy but^Δ a pretty good friend of mine^Δ and he and Bobby sat down^Δ and he committed himself to Bobby right then and

there, which meant they can't have any caucus,
that He will not go for a caucus, and the Chairman
of the State Committee won't go for a caucus,
so, therefore, there is no caucus. But he did
a really beautiful political job. He'd come
so far I couldn't believe my eyes.

HACKMAN: Come so far from when?

O'DONNELL: *From what* I'd seen him *as* a politician.

HACKMAN: The contrast to his performance in '60 is great.

O'DONNELL: He was his brother. He was as loose as a goose.
He knew just what they wanted to hear and he
acted like he loved being there. Bobby had
always been impatient, he couldn't get out fast
He just handled himself beautifully. You know if
enough to go somewhere else, ~~if~~ they think you
don't want to stay and hang around with them--
who do you think you are? The Kennedys are
wealthy and rich powerful people, *they're* so ~~he's~~ going
to say, "He's an arrogant snob". They don't care
whether ~~Kan~~ O'DONNELL stays, *they* just as soon
get rid of you because they want to go someplace
but they care whether a Kennedy stays, and he

sensed it and he just played it beautifully. he went to breakfast the next morning and he sat around and chatted and signed autographs. The women just went "ga-ga" over him-- the women delegates. They were unanimous all the old pros were just taken aback that was not Bob Kennedy, That's not the guy they read about, this arrogant ruthless fellow. He wasn't arrogant. All they kept saying-- "He's just like Jack". He turned them all around which is what he would have done with the rest of these. . . . These fellows didn't know him and had not met him and they even thought they had met him because they read so much about it in the paper about how he was a great political organizer. They almost think they had met him. That he was a no-good guy and *all of a sudden* now they find he is just like Jack Kennedy.

The next morning he sat down (Albert S.) Bert Porter and Bert Porter ^{is who's} a cold tough Bert Porter says, "Great, everything's wonderful." He

stayed around. He and I had a big argument about being late for ^{meetings} things again. Talking about the crowds he said, "the crowds influence them" and I said, "They do not. They don't influence them at the price ^{of} do you think Dick Daley would sit around and wait for you while you get on it with a few crowds? You're just in a totally different ball game. I don't care what you do in Oregon or Indiana, but when you're dealing with these guys, they think they're pretty important fellows, and it just so happens that they were prepared to stay overnight tonight because we had a breakfast for them the next morning, but if they had not, if they were going home, I mean, you live in Cleveland, you can't be hanging around Columbus till ³ three or ⁴ four o'clock in the morning. You're going to get killed on the highways." So I finally got through to him. Dutton was there, and Fred said, "I can't talk him out of it. You're the only one that can talk him out of it." He loved the crowds, and

I think for the first time Bobby was becoming his own guy. These crowds came to see Bob Kennedy not Jack Kennedy's brother, and they did something to him, as they do to any candidate. They exhilarated him, and ^{so} therefore he wanted to do it, but the fact is in this league he can't do it. The convention's the convention, and after that you've got the other.

HACKMAN:

You said he was talking to these people both in Pennsylvania and Ohio when he was trying to keep them uncommitted saying that "I'll be back if I win California." Was he saying openly that he'd have to win all the primaries? How much did Oregon unglue things here?

O'DONNELL:

Oregon didn't unglue much, no, no. He didn't say all the primaries. I think he thought he was going to win all the primaries. I thought he was going to win all the primaries. But I think the average guy that I'm talking about doesn't really look at Oregon as much of a bell weather, as to he looks at California.

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which has got an ethnic mix and a labor industrial mix and it's kind of like him. California meant something to him. Indiana meant a little bit to him but not a lot because he doesn't construe Indiana as being the United States of America and most of your primaries unfortunately were run in places that. . . . Now Nebraska impressed them because they say, "Well that's ~~not~~ Protestant not labor. Therefore in the farm belt Bobby Kennedy does very well." It impresses them more than it ought to. South Dakota would impress them ^{be} cause they say, "Well he can win not just with the big Catholic labor unions and blacks. He's winning out there where they're 99 percent whites therefore he's got a pull there." If he won big in California it sort of put it together. He's a strong candidate.

HACKMAN:

Early in Ohio there was quite a bit of open support. Stephen Young was committed early

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and then backed off. Can you remember how that came about? And Michael V. DiSalle. Was the Young thing important when he backed off, I believe after he made a commitment.

O'DONNELL: No. The fact of the matter is that the Young thing really was over John Glenn. Steve is a very difficult fellow at best, and I think he thinks he got himself in there too fast. I talked to him after that. Teddy talked to him after that. He didn't mean anything, and he doesn't mean anything, in the complex of Ohio politics. But I gather John Glenn had gone in there to make a speech, and Steve saw him, then he remembered back, and he thought the Kennedys were supporting John Glenn against him last time, so he got mad and decided he'd change his mind. He didn't affect the... We held Ohio pretty well together. I'd say if they had sat down, we'd probably split the delegation. We didn't have

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Young. So then I have to go in and patch
up the fight he had between the-- because

Bobby was really just going in to see

[Thomas Van ⁴²] Vailo

Tom Vailo well, while you're there, the guys
meet you and they started a heck of a fight.

It took us two weeks to get that one
straightened out. But Mike, you know, you
go out to the Governor's Conference, for
example, well, Mike DiSalte is a help.

All governors like each other and all got the
same problem, and he's got a title better than
me, and Mike and I together go pretty good.
He can get me into a lot of places I can't
get in. I can do some thing ^{maybe} there when I
get there, but he's very widely respected by
other governors, and if you've held political
office, people who hold it and are involved in
it rather admire you. Back home you might be
a pariah, but out in St. Louis pretty good
stuff.

HACKMAN:

What about this guy ¹⁰² (Howard) Metzenbaum, ^{was} whose getting a lot of publicity at the time as an early Kennedy guy. Did you spend much time with him?

O'DONNELL:

Yeah, he's got the same problem Mike's got. For every friend he's got nine enemies. And Howard's one of those guys he loves to be in the newspaper. He's the kind of guy you like to have with you because he's got a little strength, but for every guy he wins, he loses three of them. So you just got to keep Howard dampened down. Now Howard would call Ted Sorensen at the ^{top} ~~top~~ of a hat, so I used to leave him with Ted Sorensen. "You keep your communication, and I'll stay with the pros." Well, he thought I didn't like him, and I finally got him straightened out. Howard, you can't keep him quiet, he gets in that paper and he just. . . . BUT you have a million self-announced leaders and after a while they don't pay any attention to them.

HACKMAN: What about [John J.] Gilligan and the people around him. Much cooperation there?

O'DONNELL: Oh, yeah, but they had their own fight and th
a matter of fact, Gilligan in this kind of a
contest is not much of a factor. He doesn't
have any particular strength. And he wanted to
stay away from us, and we had no interest. We
knew he was for us, and ^{they'd} would do whatever they
could for us.