

Frederick G. Dutton Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 11/18/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Frederick G. Dutton
Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman
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Biographical Note

Dutton was the deputy national chairman of Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson in 1960; Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy [JFK] in 1961; Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations from 1961 to 1964; and political adviser and campaign aide to Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]; and campaign aide to Senator George McGovern in 1972. In this interview Dutton discusses his personal and working relationships with RFK; his role in Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 presidential campaign; RFK's staff from 1964 to 1968; and RFK's 1968 presidential campaign, among other issues.

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Frederick G. Dutton – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

FREDERICK G. DUTTON

November 18, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the Kennedy Library

DUTTON: My relationship with Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] when I was in the State Department was fairly casual. Like President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], Bob would call me there occasionally just to find out what was going on, and I gathered at the time that I was one of the individuals being used to sort of get an insight other than they'd get, let's say, from Rusk [Dean Rusk] or so forth, especially since I'd been in the White House staff and been involved in politics with them. And, oh, I don't know, at one stage, for example, when they were getting ready to do a big reorganization of the administrative side of the State Department, which I was not in, they wanted to know of various personalities and so forth. It was always very casual and low-key. I used to go out to Hickory Hill social events occasionally, but I can't say I was ever really very close to him is the truth of the matter. He'd call up and ask this question, ask me to drop by Justice and chat, but there was nothing terribly major or anything like that. My relationship in that period was almost entirely with President Kennedy, and Bob was quite secondary.

HACKMAN: Did he have anything to do with the decision that you'd go to the State Department from the White House? Do you know if he fed in a strong viewpoint there?

DUTTON: I don't have any idea. I don't think so. I don't know whether the Morrissey [Charles T. Morrissey] interview had it or not, but I was on the White House staff, had been one of the few people who had not been actively for the Kennedys way back. I'd been Pat Brown's [Edmund G. Brown] political advisor, had been trying to protect him and make sense out of the Democratic Party in California. I came to be for John F. Kennedy reluctantly, slowly. I was surprised when I got on the White House staff after the campaign; I didn't want to in fact, but Bob.... I used to see Bob during the '60 fall campaign fairly often. Almost every night, in fact, we'd chat about what was going on. And after the November election, about ten days later, he asked me to drop by and said what would I like to do. And I said I felt like going to the State Department or Defense or something like that. He said, well, his brother wanted me to go on the White House staff. And I said, "Well, I really would prefer not to," that I'd been on the Governor's staff in California, and I was a little tired of staff work and wanted to get out on my own. And he said, well, he'd talk with Jack and get back to me. So he called three or four days later.... It was printed that I was with Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan], one of the two who was supposed to go in between the Irish Mafia and Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] group. Anyway, then I saw Bob infrequently during the White House period, Cabinet meetings and so forth, but when I went to State it was pretty much.... Dean Rusk one day asked me if I'd go. He was having trouble with his congressional relations.

HACKMAN: Brooks Hays [Lawrence Brooks Hays].

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DUTTON: Brooks Hays wasn't working out, and at that stage I said.... Then I said no, I didn't want to go, that I was happy where I was and had gotten to like the White House life. And he said, "Well, don't say anything to President Kennedy. I haven't talked to him yet." And then he went into a Cabinet meeting, and afterwards the President called me over and said that Rusk wanted me to go over to State. And I said, "Well, let me think about it overnight." And the next day I went into the President's office and said I'd decided I didn't want to go unless he insisted on it. So we dropped it. About two weeks later Rusk raised the subject again, and we went through two or three days, and I said no again. And then a couple weeks later I got a call one weekend—I think it was a Saturday—saying that there's going to be a big shake up in the State Department, and there are going to be a number of moves. And the President asked me if I'd go over. Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] called me, and the President got on the line and said that if I didn't like it, I could come back to the White House after six months or a year.

Well, my assumption is that it was the President and Rusk and sort of the shake up of the State Department, not Bob in any direct sense. Bob's interest in the State Department, as far as I know, developed to a considerable extent after the Bay of Pigs thing and when he was on the committee reexamining the intelligence unit and then—oh, I don't know when, but I would say sometime, let's say, late '62, early '63. He never confided this in me, but it was my impression that the idea was gelling in his own mind that he'd like to go over to State as Under Secretary or something else like that. There were lots of rumors. And he was never specific with me though, and I would suspect if President Kennedy hadn't been shot, that he

HACKMAN: What about California politics during the Administration? Anything on appointments after the Administration gets underway or....

DUTTON: No. I prepared some memos, but they were mainly for President Kennedy. Bob really wasn't all that concerned in recruiting in terms of California as a state. And then there were enough Californians, like Pierre Salinger [Pierre E. G. Salinger] and others, who were sort of lobbying and trying to get appointments for others. By the time we got in the White House, Bob had moved out of everything except a very few top appointments, as far as I know, and Dungan was really handling 90, 95 percent.

HACKMAN: How does Unruh's [Jesse M. Unruh] relationship during the Administration develop with the President and with Robert Kennedy? Does it change a lot?

DUTTON: Well, Unruh's relationship was almost entirely with JFK as far as I know. Jess had established an early close relationship with JFK, and to a lesser extent with Bob, by November of '59 when he went over to Las Vegas with a guy by the name of Bill Munnell [William A. Munnell], who was the chairman of the Democratic Party in California, and they had made.... There was sort of an understanding that they'd help try to get the nomination in California. At that stage I was, for example, very much opposed to that on the basis that it was people making individual deals and splintering California's strength come the

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next July. But as Jess sort of moved along, he, oh, I'd say, focused most of his relationship on JFK so long as he was alive. President Kennedy got Jess the Chubb Fellowship at Yale and Bob is.... Well, you know, he'd see Jess when Jess would come back to Washington, but it was incidental. Jess also had a close relationship with O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] at that stage, and that made Bob all the more incidental in terms of Unruh's visits here.

HACKMAN: Okay. Then after the assassination, I guess, where do you really become involved with him?

DUTTON: I guess late November or December, whenever it was that they decided to do the oral history project. He called me over one day and asked me if I'd undertake it. And I said I had no background or experience and so forth like that. And he said that didn't matter, that he and Bundy and Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and some others apparently had a meeting and decided that I was the one that they wanted to have do it, and would I put it together. So I said sure, which meant I then ran it out of my State Department offices. Through that I got to know Bob, was one of the ten or twelve or something like that who talked about the development of the John F. Kennedy Institute at Harvard—which is still not airborne—and had a number of meetings with Bob

and Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis] and others during that period. So I saw him with some frequency.

And then, I guess to jump ahead to February or March, I just found myself getting invited over to Justice or to go up to Hyannis and to Boston and things like that. I was beginning to see him more and more, and I began to make comments like a lot of people that I thought he should get moving along and get active again. And I guess during that period I developed a substantially closer relationship than

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I had before, although still it was not all that close. I was in State; he was in Justice, and there was a big void. When he was looking at the vice-presidential possibility in '64, he talked with me a number of times, merely elliptically. He never said flat-out that he was going to go for it or even that he was considering—it was obvious he was. And we had discussions, and I made some suggestions. I don't remember what they are now, to be honest.

And what he decided finally—which was his idea; I don't know where he got the idea—was to go to Poland. On that trip there he originally had tried to get Averell Harriman [William Averell Harriman] and possibly others to set up the itinerary and get the thing organized. It was obviously a delicate matter; one, because Bob and Johnson's [Lyndon B. Johnson] antagonisms were well-known. Johnson was President and so forth, and everybody was being fairly careful in how they walked the line between Kennedy and Johnson. In any event, Bob's itinerary and clearance with the Polish Embassy and so forth dragged out for several weeks. Finally, at one point he asked me if I'd sort of step in and try to push that along, which I did. I was handling congressional travel for all senators and congressman, which was naturally under my jurisdiction anyway. So that was an easy thing to handle through on.

Oh, about that time Johnson called me over one day and asked me if I'd resign as Assistant Secretary of State and with Moyers [William D. Moyers], do the basic research and planning for the '64 presidential campaign. So I began to phase out of State and didn't plan to resign until some time in July as I recall. And then in June one day I went out on a cross-country flying trip with Johnson and the White House staff. I don't know why they asked me to go along. While we were out in San Francisco at the Paramount Hotel, I got a call from Bob saying that the Polish thing had come unstuck and would I put it back together again, which I coaxed the State Department to do. And as far as I was concerned, I wasn't being disloyal to Johnson or anybody else. I was just putting together a foreign trip that obviously had political implications and mentioned it to Moyers, and there was no flak.

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But in any event, I went through the White House switchboard, and for some reason that I still don't know to this day, and don't care one way or the other, Bundy found out all about it. And the next thing I know an Evans [Roland Evans, Jr.] and Novak [Robert D. Novak] piece turned up that from San Francisco, while I'm traveling with Johnson, I'm setting up Kennedy's trip for Poland to pressure Johnson to nominate him vice president. All the things were there; I was either a little bit innocent or disingenuous or something. I had no

intention to be, but my relationships with Johnson from then on were not of the best. He insisted that I still put together, first, the draft of the 1964 National Platform; then run the Platform Committee at the '64 Convention; and then move over to do all the basic literature with Moyers and TV spots and all that kind of stuff for that campaign.

I remember then Bob went off on his trip. I had nothing to do with him from that stage on. I'd see him occasionally on special business. And I remember I was up in the Old Senate Office Building one day, and I got a message, I don't know, from somebody saying to give him a call over at Justice. And he said that he'd just come from the White House, and Johnson just told him he wasn't going to get the thing. He was interesting. As far as I could tell he was purely calm, and if he had any anger, so forth, by the time he called me it was all gone, which was almost typical Kennedy. He was fairly fatalistic—"Alright. So that's it. We'll move on to the next one." He then went up to New York to campaign. He wanted me to help him. I'd already made my commitment to Johnson, and so I stayed down here. I saw him through the '64 campaign; I didn't see him very much up there. A couple of times they asked me if I'd go up and look at their problems they had. Bob had some trouble making the transition from a campaign manager for his brother to a campaign himself and getting untracked. Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] was setting up the campaign, but I just went and looked at that thing. But I was just basically not in the fall of '64 because I was tied down 100 percent here.

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HACKMAN: You gave a couple of speeches out on Long Island with some other people like Schlesinger and...

DUTTON: No.

HACKMAN: Don't remember that?

DUTTON: No.

HACKMAN: Jack English [John F. English] remembers you being out there.

DUTTON: No, I was never there.

HACKMAN: Okay.

DUTTON: No, I never gave a speech. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: That's oral history for you.

DUTTON: Yes. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Well, let me just ask you. Did he ever spell out, then, his real thoughts on the vice-presidency in terms of how it might have worked with Johnson or

how he conceived that a vice-presidency with Johnson could work out?

DUTTON: No. As you've probably gotten, Bob basically didn't talk out things, or he didn't elaborate his thought on something like that. I think that he communicated that he thought, once he was vice-president, certainly he'd be working for him just like Johnson had worked for John F. Kennedy. It would be the same thing—some distance, estranged and so forth—no more than the relationship that had already gone through. I don't know in my own mind whether Bob really had faced up to the difficulties of the strained relationship of himself and Johnson as both pretty tough, quite willful men. My suspicion is that he—I don't know—no, that he probably didn't face all the ramifications of that. He thought it would be no different than with JFK. Well, the truth of the matter is that JFK didn't have all of the intensity that both Johnson and Bob had.

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HACKMAN: You said you talked to him earlier that spring in places like Hyannis or Hickory Hill or wherever. What kind of things were you encouraging him to do, get out and speak or...

DUTTON: Yes. My original interest in the thing with him, personally, was not political because I just didn't see him running for vice president and was surprised when that idea came along in his own mind. I just thought that he was so deeply depressed, so down at the very bottom of everything, that he really had to get out and get going; that the only way to pull himself together was to get active again; that it wasn't enough to play touch football at Hickory Hill and absorb himself in Justice Department work; that he really had to get, I'd say, almost out of Justice—not necessarily resign—but he had to move around and so forth.

I wasn't at all in the discussions whether he'd run from Massachusetts or New York. I gathered from the very start it was decided that he'd run from New York. I didn't urge him at that time, which I would assume showed up in the memos. I didn't see why he necessarily had to run for office in '64. I decided subsequently that I was wrong on that point, and then more recently, I'm not sure I was wrong. I thought that in the context of '64—Johnson becoming President; he and Bob having bad relations—that it wasn't good for the country or anybody else that they collide personally. I knew that someday he'd probably want to run nationally, but why didn't he just go off and be a private man, travel around the world, do things like that? I'm still convinced.... One, I thought it would be interesting for him. I thought he could have a good life, more time with his kids and so forth—but purely at the level of the public man.

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I thought then, and I think now, that these people don't have to have public offices all the time, that if you have your own solid ideas, you write books and so forth like that. I thought that Bob might develop intellectually more, a greater sense of history and so forth, a sense of where the hell the country is or is going, and not sort of always being so activist that

he didn't retreat for reflection. I'm not sure that he was ever that type of a reflective individual where, let's say, where he could just ruminate. But at the level purely of the cosmetics of politics, I'm a great believer that for some reason now—television and so forth, the alienation of the country from politicians and the political system, which I think goes on as much in the Wallace [George C. Wallace] group as the kids or the new middle class—that they want to measure you as a human being, that you have to really have some solid depth. I'm proven wrong in terms of the present crop of politicians. But that TV camera bores into you so much that if you really would have something, if you thought out your own things, you're fairly well-organized and almost at peace with yourself, that that will get through. There'll be more of a quiet strength about it. Bob would not have had the liabilities of being too ambitious, too ruthless, exploiting the family name, not being just a politician and so forth like that. Now the overwhelming preponderance of the advice is to the contrary, but...

HACKMAN: Were you making those points to him in '64? I ask because the earliest memo that we have is July '65, so we don't have anything that I can find on '64.

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DUTTON: Oh, yes. There are a number of memos from '64. I made these arguments in memos—that everybody was advising. “You've got to go run.” And I was making the pitch—oh, I'll say at least there are three or four memos typed—“Why do you have to run? Why can't you take a year or two off? Why can't you just go around the world? Why can't you pace yourself? If you want to run, maybe run in a couple of years, but why immediately? Why not just grow personally?” and so forth like that. I guess that I completely misread Bob because he was always in such a hurry and didn't want to waste time and was compulsive about whatever he did. I don't know, let's say with entirely different figures, I still think there's some merit in that approach. But there are memos.

HACKMAN: Did he ever comment later on that?

DUTTON: Oh no, no. After he got elected in New York, he used to kid me. People would be complimenting him or praising him or something like that—Bob used to needle you—he'd say, “Well, Fred Dutton always thought I should go off to South Africa,” or something like that, but that was just sort of his way of banter.

HACKMAN: Do you know what kinds of advice any of the other important advisers around him were giving him?

DUTTON: No. I assume everybody was giving the advice to run. The people in that period that I would guess would be terribly important, I would think, are Steve Smith, Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy]—although to a lesser extent; Bob would disagree with that, but I still think to a lesser extent—Ethel [Ethel Skakel]

Kennedy] certainly; Jackie to some extent; more that group than, let's say, outside advisers. The Justice Department—I guess Nick

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Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach] would be important; most of the rest of the Justice Department people were not all that political or politic. Burke Marshall, whom he had great affection and respect for, would give advice when asked on things like this, but Burke is, let's say, not overly political really. And I would guess that the counseling and the pressure was coming almost entirely from within the family.

HACKMAN: This is just to run. Now, you're not speaking particularly in terms of the vice-presidency?

DUTTON: No, not exactly. I'm speaking just to run, whether to establish a separate base in Massachusetts—let's say run for the governorship, which the Kennedys have always avoided—or to move to New York. No, no, the vice-presidency, that was, to the best of my knowledge, a far less explicit thing. There's so many things going in politics that everybody knows what you're doing or what you're thinking about, but it just isn't discussed. I would think that was just a classic example. To the extent it was discussed, I was never terribly privy to it. I volunteered some things, but I've always thought that these guys would.... You could volunteer your two bits worth and be as explicit as hell, and they don't necessarily register or respond as though they're really thinking that consciously. I usually think they are, but they don't necessarily admit it.

HACKMAN: How did you come to start writing memos to him in '64?

DUTTON: A couple of things, more my personality than anything else: One, since I wasn't that close to him and didn't see him that often, I could put it through that way. Two—this goes back to just my manner of operating in California and so forth—I just think with memos that you can compact it down and get it clearer. Conversations with political people, as far as I'm concerned, including myself, tend to get elliptical, and I just think in the memo you sort of go down one, two, three in a more organized way.

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HACKMAN: Some people have said, though, that he was not a memo reader, that he was basically a talker in terms of making decisions.

DUTTON: I agree with that, and yet I think that my relationship, which finally, I guess, developed to be very close, I'd say developed strictly out of memos originally. No, he was more of a talker than a reader, particularly he wouldn't take long memos.

HACKMAN: Are there times when he asked for memos, or does he usually just...

DUTTON: Yes.... No, no, no, no, no. He'd ask if I'd put down my thoughts on something or the other, this or that or the other thing. One example—I assume the memo is in the files—oh, it must have been the fall of '65 or early '66 when he was under considerable pressure to go to South Vietnam, and he wanted my views on whether or not he should. I know he was consulting various people around town. We talked on the phone at length. He called me at the house one night, and after it he said, "Would you put that down in writing so I can see it on a piece of paper?"

HACKMAN: Okay, now one of your points on that trip was that, "Well, McNamara, Harriman, and Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] are telling you to go, and maybe you shouldn't go. And maybe McNamara's trying to take away a little attention." How would he react to something like that?

DUTTON: Oh, Bob never gave his reactions back.

HACKMAN: Never? To any of your memos?

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DUTTON: Yes, but on something, let's say, like what I was saying here in effect.... And there's more of a history behind it. Both Ken O'Donnell and myself never could understand—and Bob McNamara's a good friend, I should interpose, and he's the president of this thing [Robert Kennedy Memorial] that I'm running now—but O'Donnell and I could never understand how McNamara could be so dovish and pro-Kennedy and so close to Johnson when Kennedy and Johnson not only had their own hostilities as rival lions, but saw so differently on Vietnam. O'Donnell and I over and over pounded away that we just....Bob McNamara is in total good faith and sincere and so forth like that, but I just don't understand how one human being sort of flits back and forth between two separate lion dens like that where there's so much sort of animosity and wariness and so forth. And that fed into that particular memo. I thought McNamara, in good faith, wanted to get Bob over there to look at it, I thought, in effect to educate him and sell him. As I think I said to him in the memos, I said to him a number of times orally that I don't see how you go to a combat zone and not be for the war, not be for the soldiers. I'd been in the infantry in World War II—ended up in a German POW [Prisoner of War] camp—and you see guys get shot up and killed, and you react out of short-term considerations.

HACKMAN: Those are the memos if you want to look at any of them.

DUTTON: What Bob would usually do when he would get these things would be to call up, and he'd ask sort of an abrupt question here and a jab question there. But this is true of both him and JFK. They never, as far as I know, discussed subjects in sort of a comprehensive, organized, laid out way. This was their objection to

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Chet Bowles [Chester B. Bowles], that people who needed that approach—which I think I tend to like—are too worried, took up too much time. More was almost communicated in their silences or things they skipped over than in their questions. Their questions were not always that insightful. Their omissions, to me, often told as much about what they were doing. But I came to know that it was apparently an internal Kennedy family way, that you can jump all over the place—just an incisive thing there, and you’ve got it. Why bother to lay out the whole subject? And he responded through suggestions or memos in that way really.

HACKMAN: Is it your impression that he takes your memos and shows them to other people?

DUTTON: I never knew that. I used to be curious whether he did or not. I don’t know, to be honest with you. I know that he would test out the ideas, as I’m sure you’re aware, that his basic way of reaching a decision was to get widely diverse viewpoints, ask a number of different people, and then settle on his own viewpoint. But he didn’t take, as far as I ever knew, just one or two pieces of advice. JFK didn’t do that either. He and Bob were terribly close, but things that Bob would say—little problems and situations I was involved in—JFK would, let’s say, he’d ask McNamara, Rusk, some newspaper guy, a low-level guy in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and things like that, and out of those varied ingredients then make up his own mind. And Bob had almost exactly the same way of getting briefed and then reaching his own decision. So I assume, let’s say, if I’d make a suggestion or he’d ask me to write a memo, that he was going to test out the thing on various people. And he’d call me, like the Vietnam visit thing, and say, “McNamara suggests so and so,” or, “McNamara and Harriman are urging me to do this, and what do you think about it?” I think he went around that way with everybody.

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HACKMAN: There are three or four of these a year. Does that make sense to you? Is that a pretty complete file?

DUTTON: Yes, I’d say that was a complete file. One thing that I used to try to do with Bob—which came almost from my, oh, I don’t know, California political experience, which is more immediate and less organizational—and one of the ways that Bob used me was that he was terribly organizationally minded. He appreciated the importance of television, but he liked to have people sort of propose, oh, I guess media happenings, things like that. And I was one of those people that I knew he was sort of using in trip ideas. Someplace in there there must be one Outer Mongolia. We talked about that damn thing....

HACKMAN: It’s in there at least five or six times.

DUTTON: I still think it's one of the great ideas. Well, the interesting thing is this last spring McCarthy [Eugene R. McCarthy] and Teddy—both of them talking to me in the period, and they both knew about what the other one was doing—they both were trying to get into Peking in the worst way. God, they had conversations with some trading company in Montreal—I don't know where they got it—and they were working through the Polish and the Czech embassies here in Washington. I think if either of one of them could have parachuted in, he would have. And I used to argue with Teddy, and I said, "Well, look, I used to try to get Bob to go to Outer Mongolia," and I said, "I'm not going to try to sell the same turkey to you." But I still think that's a better way to get at it. This is the way so many of these politicians.... Well, look at Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] between '62 and '68, takes these trips abroad. This is where you get scope and status and a whole bunch of subjectives qualities quite beyond.

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HACKMAN: Would he ever come back at you, and say, "Jesus Christ, Fred, that's a stupid idea!" or "I don't like that because....?"

DUTTON: No. It would just drop into a great void of silence. Bob had that—it wasn't a talent—that lack of diplomacy, which I'd see him display. He never did it with me, no special reason. He could say, "Well, that's a dumb idea," and you'd be sitting around talking. He didn't hesitate to give somebody the back of his hand.

HACKMAN: You mean directly, or you'd just be one of a group, and he'd comment on your idea?

DUTTON: One of a group, basically. I never saw him ever, to the best of my knowledge, ever put anybody down on one to one really. But in a group let's say that I would suggest something, or Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] or Adam [Adam Walinsky], someone like that. Bob wouldn't hesitate to say, "Oh, I think that's the most ridiculous idea I've heard all day." I think part of it was his directness, or he thought this was a way to establish a closer relationship. I think for other people it was sometimes sort of to rock you back. I mean most people will sort of diplomatically say, "Well, let's not do that," or sort of smile. Bob wouldn't hesitate to sort of give you the back of his hand. I'm not sure he knew that he was doing it, but it was a personal mannerism. There have been reports from the members of the press when they'd ask him a question, and he'd respond, "Why, you know that's a stupid question," or something else like that.

HACKMAN: Other than those memos, how frequently and how did you communicate? How often were you seeing him in '65 to '68, let's say?

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DUTTON: He'd call up fairly often. I frankly made a practice of not calling up, part

out of a certain reticence that I thought he was busy, and I didn't know him that well, and part out of the fact of having worked for JFK and then established a relationship with him. I've always been uncomfortable with the idea of just working for the Kennedys as the Kennedys. I think that you've got to maintain your own integrity and identity and distance and life, and so forth. So I could go long periods of time without seeing him. I never went out to Hickory Hill, except for infrequent parties that I was invited to and so forth. I didn't have a close relationship, I'd say like Peter [Peter B. Edelman] and Adam. I didn't see him with the frequency that his old Justice Department people did.

HACKMAN: Who were the people around him that you're particularly close to, Adam and Peter? Or, how are you tied in with Sorensen, O'Donnell, O'Brien, all these?

DUTTON: Well, the way the newspaper guys have said it is that I—in the '68 campaign, and I think before that—was sort of the bridge with the various groups. I was the one, as I'd come into the White House originally, to be between the [Irish] Mafia and the Sorensen group, and finally worked out a workable relationship, not a close one, with either one. The same thing was with Bob's staff, with these guys. And then in the '68 campaign, as it worked out—well, let's say in terms of anti-Vietnam attitudes in '65, '66, and '67—I had considerably more in common, as it developed, with Adam and Peter than, let's say, I did with the others. I was much more dovish. I believed, at least in '66—and I get it, I think, from being on the Board of Regents at the University of California—that tremendous change has gone on in the kids, and so forth like that. I think it's a healthy thing; it's a desirable thing. Even if it isn't, politicians better learn to channel it and direct it and exploit and prosper from it and so forth like that.

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And the Sorensen group was not at all that way. Of the Irish, O'Donnell, I thought, particularly in '68, showed great adaptability and understanding and so forth. So many of those people—let's say Pierre, Sorensen, and, well, the George Balls [George W. Ball] and so forth—they really would have clung to the old politics as it was. The idea of participation and involvement, the critiques of the New Left, they weren't very aware of them. I probably wouldn't have been except through my exposure out in Berkeley in intensive doses. One, either they were uniformed in lots of developments; and two, when they got them they would get them through organs, articles that were essentially critical. And there was a gap! So I finally, I'd say, fit in someplace between my own age group—I'm 46—and Adam and Peter, and was used somewhat by Bob as a bridge in that way deliberately.

HACKMAN: Were there many times when Adam and Peter are calling you to suggest things so that you, in turn, will suggest them to him since they know he respects your point of view?

DUTTON: No. Peter never did that with me at all; Adam did a few times. Adam is so

much more aggressive, assertive than Peter or I or almost anybody, that he would use up his goodwill and muscle and then would come around and try to use me. I always tried to avoid that though. I mean, you could tell when somebody's doing that. If I've got something to say, I'll say it, but I'm not going to be a bridge for somebody else. Adam and I ganged up a few times on Bob in terms of the Vietnam War trying to get a viewpoint across or so forth. But my basic usefulness to Bob, or John F. Kennedy, or some of the other people I've helped in politics, is I try to keep some detachment, almost too much dispassion. Adam used to say that's too much objectivity, and objectivity's a phony. But I think that when you try to help somebody else, when it's not your career or neck on the line, that you need to take into

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consideration what you believe personally and what you're trying to accomplish in politics or public life. But you've also got to understand their self-interest and their problems and relationships, and take that into account. That's very old politics. Adam, for example, and Peter to a considerable extent—that disturbs the hell out of them. When Peter gets ready to go on something, boy, he believes in it and it's right. I admire that; let's say I'm a little bit more cynical. In any event, my willingness or tendency to sort of take a step back and try to look at some of the nonsubstantive considerations, which the memos show thoroughly—the cosmetics of politics to a great extent—I think was one of the reasons that Bob used me. Now, I was used there, though, only in a technical, methodological way, the way that he was using Peter and Adam substantively. Bob was completely re-educated by them; they were younger, brighter, more intellectual, more turned-on. And some of the experiences I was going through through the University of California, Bobby was going through due to Peter and Adam.

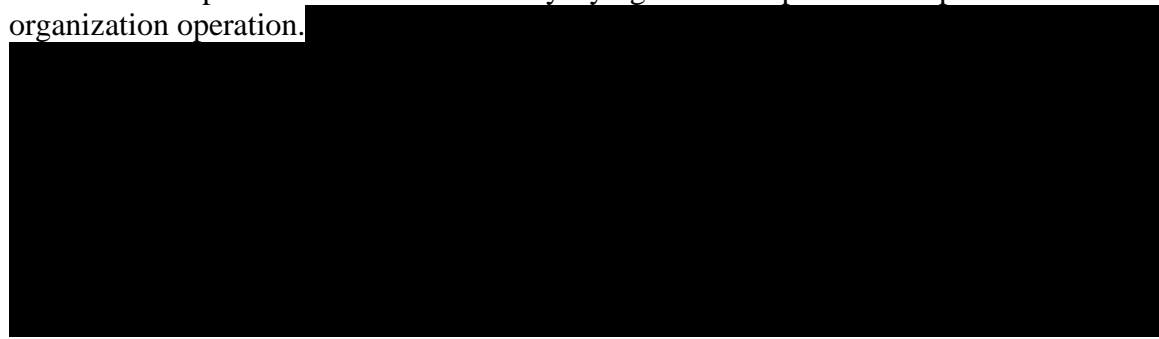
I think one of Bob's virtues in the '65 to '68 period was he was one of the few major politicians in the country who was trying to re-examine things, who was getting influenced by some of these new influences. I thought Teddy, frankly, a year ago, after Bob was assassinated, that Teddy should bring on some young guys like Adam and Peter. Now he has the young guys like Dave Burke [David W. Burke] and Dun Gifford [K. Dun Gifford], who were bright and able as hell, but they and I are more of the same mold. They're political operators, and they're not aware of a lot of the oversimplifications of the New Left; it was too limited. But Bob was getting that, and it was healthy as hell. And he was perfectly capable, as he showed, of sorting it out and using it or not using it. When he didn't use it going into the war effort, I think that he was wrong for his own career and wrong for the country. But I don't see why these politicians are afraid, really, to sort of take intense young men and let themselves be exposed and influenced by them.

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HACKMAN: Yes. One of the things you bring out in the memo though, at one point, is that you feel he's got good idea men, but they're becoming too

operational. And you suggest, at one point, that he bring in O'Donnell as a "no" man and bring back Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman]. What were the problems that prompted you to recommend that?

DUTTON: Well, I'm not sure when the memo on Guthman coming back was. His press operation until Frank [Frank F. Mankiewicz] came, and even for a while after Mankiewicz came, left everything to be desired. He had some nice guys, Wes Barthelmes [A. Wesley Barthelmes, Jr.] and others, but he wasn't taking their advice. The first thing with Kennedy or any of these major politicians is they've got to have confidence in you and be willing to rely on you. And if they don't, no matter how good you are, you might as well get out of the slot. Then I thought that he needed O'Donnell just because, to be honest, I just think O'Donnell is the best political operator in the country. He's essentially a "no" guy; he has intense loyalty and everything else like that. I would assume that was in the period when Bob was really trying to crank up a national political organization operation.



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HACKMAN: You're saying then, basically, that he didn't have much confidence in Barthelmes, or he wasn't listening to what he was saying?

DUTTON: Yes. Wes was almost, I'll say, too sweet a guy, too hesitant and retiring. I'm not qualified to say what his and Bob's relationship was face-to-face, but just from the results you'd see Wes just wasn't getting through; Bob was being his own press guy.

HACKMAN: Okay. The memo on bringing Guthman in happens in March of '67, and that's right after the whole peace feeler episode. Is that tied in to what you're saying?

DUTTON: Well, yes and no. Yes, in this sense, in that Bob, I thought, messed that whole thing up. If you remember the thing, first he wasn't going to say something, then he had a press conference and he did, and then Moyers jockeyed him back off about two or three positions. We had some discussions with Frank in that period, and I just felt that Bob needed more people saying no to him. Frank is terribly able. He doesn't show it at all now, but in that period Frank had a certain lack of self-confidence about it. I have no idea why. It's probably his own personality like most of us, but

he was not standing up to Bob which I think is important. I think a staff guy really helps these people if they're willing to say no and shout and be willing to get kicked out if necessary. And Frank was trying to hold on to his job. Frank was almost just too respectful or hesitant, or something else like that. I thought that people with the experience or age of Guthman and Kenny would correct that. At this stage I'd say I was wrong. I mean, I think it got straightened out.

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HACKMAN: In your point that the idea men are too operational, can you think of specific things that went wrong, anything really strike you?

DUTTON: Well, no. My...

HACKMAN: Senate business...

DUTTON: No. My best insight into this was in the fall of '66. I went out to California to try to help Pat Brown after it was obvious he was going to lose. And we set up that trip for Bob to California, and I had a pretty good chance to see his operation going then. Well, it was even true in '68. I don't think Peter and Adam would appreciate my saying this—I've argued with them—but in '68, for example (I can cite it easier in that context) they would get so damn concerned with what they believed or what they thought, or wanting to discuss the substance and detail of a particular problem. And my point is that when you're out on the campaign—'66 or '68—you don't try to argue with everybody. You get your shot at them; you try to convince them; if you lose the battle, you quit. Adam particularly—for Peter this was not so. This was not true at all of Peter, but it's very true of Adam. Adam would never take no. He would re-argue the same goddamn subject every day. The candidate has only so much energy to give. The same thing was true in '67 on the Hill, that Adam, if he didn't get his way on a particular speech or problem, would want to fight it out. Well, Kennedy would have ten other speeches or problems or appearances or committee hearings that he should be moving on to, and Adam was really always going back to the other. And Adam was so invaluable. He was essential as far as I'm concerned. He was and is great, but there just had to be somebody around there who's willing to go to work for Bob full-time to tell Adam shut up, which was one of my roles in the '68 campaign, which Bob didn't have in the

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'67 period. I guess I should say I never considered, nor wanted, nor would have gone to work with him on a full-time basis. It just wasn't my cup of tea. I did in '68 very reluctantly. I keep trying to avoid getting into this position of sort of political manipulation. I like it and enjoy it, but I just think it's a thing to keep pulling back from, not just to be a political operator.

HACKMAN: Speaking of '66, I can remember, I believe, an early '66 memo where you tell him, "You should really be thinking about what you're going to do in

the '66 campaign. Steve Smith maybe should take a scouting trip. You should work it out with Teddy Kennedy's schedule and everything so you complement each other." Did that happen at all?

DUTTON: To some extent. Here again, what I was both, let's say, volunteering for and being used for was to try to provide a more comprehensive organizational form than was ever followed. One of the interesting things about Bob—and this goes back to the '60 campaign—everybody always thought he was a great political organizer. Well, it was a base canard from the very beginning. He used to laugh about it and kid personally that.... He was very good at "We'll set up this operation" or "We'll ram that thing through" and so forth, but the idea that he would lay out a blueprint for a campaign that...

HACKMAN: Never happened.

DUTTON: ... no, never happened. That was not his cup of tea. And in that thing [the memo], I think the primary thing to that was the layout—what should be done in terms of how to make the best use of '66. As far as I know Steve never did go out around the country.

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Bob and Ted did have, I'm sure you know, two or three times a day consultation, so they knew in terms of speeches and complementing each other's positions and activities and everything else like that. I don't think anybody really knew how close that was. I couldn't document it, but I was more and more convinced that it was a very close and continuous thing. But Bob, right up to the very end—as I think was shown by the scattershot, seat-of-the-pants way we put together the '68 campaign on the run—he never really established an effective political organization in his office, like JFK had done in the late fifties, or Nixon had going all through the sixties, or guys like Muskie [Edmund S. Muskie] and McGovern [George S. McGovern] and Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] are trying to put together now. And yet here he was known as this big political mastermind.

HACKMAN: At one point I believe.... Well, again in '68 you're recommending that, through the winter of '67, '68, that something like that take place with a card system being set up or whatever. And at one time Dolan comes down, I believe, and works in Gwartzman's [Milton S. Gwartzman] office. I think Bruno's [Gerald J. Bruno] making some phone calls in New York, or whatever. Is that basically because you could not?

DUTTON: No, I don't think so. I think, for example, Joe's operations are very much Joe's initiative or instigation. But to try to put these sort of in the period, there were so many people, I think, who were suggesting the same thing I was—most of them orally, sometimes random and so forth like that. Joe, I think, decided finally to do it of his own initiative or his own just analysis of what has to be done for a

political operation in part, and in part just trying to stay ahead of all the kibitzing that was going on with him by me and so damn many other people. That's right, Joe had a very tough role.

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HACKMAN: Does he ever show you memos that other people write...

DUTTON: No.

HACKMAN: ... to ask for your comments?

DUTTON: Oh, yes. I can't remember off the top of my head. I would.... From time to time, you'd be in his office and he'd say, "Would you take a look at this and tell me what you think?" I used to be bothered by his wanting that kind of advice. How the hell do you—you get a piece of paper and you look at it, and it's 5:50, and there are ten people rushing in and out of the office—and how are you going to give a thoughtful response? But that was, without question, Bob's style of operating. If you weren't sort of willing to fly by the seat of your pants, you almost didn't fit into his milieu really.

HACKMAN: One of the points you make over and over to him again is that he concentrate on just several major areas and try to establish an image in those terms.

DUTTON: Yes, that's one of my basic theories, generally. It'll never be done, but a guy particularly like Kennedy, all of them, tend to spread themselves too thin, in my opinion, and Bob particularly so. So I think it's important that—let's say, the popular word now is "priorities"—that you just don't go around just giving this little thing encouragement or this one a pat and that one a push, and so forth like that. It's so easy in politics or in public life to write on sand, and after you've gotten through you haven't really made any big contribution. Most of the things that are going on in the environment they'll move ahead on their own. They have a certain slow momentum. But if somebody like the President of the United States or a key political figure like Bob Kennedy is going

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to have any effect, they really need to concentrate on it. And secondly, purely from the cosmetics of politics, the public is really bored, indifferent, and notices the politicians, I think, very little and doesn't think about them. And you've got to keep going back over and over and repeating the theme if, when they think about you, they're not just going to think about the name Kennedy—dead brother who was President, glamour, and a wealthy family. They're really going to think that you think something about—you're doing something for poor people or you're doing something about law and order or something or other. The need

to establish in millions of minds something beyond just that you're a politician or the other obvious things about the Kennedys, I think, requires great emphasis.

Trying to get substantive things through in public education, I just think is a terribly difficult thing. I'm more and more convinced that most of the public attitudes are shaped by the Depression or a World War II or the length of the Cold War. Let's say we want to erode the virulence of their anti-communism so that we have more discretion in foreign policy, or we want to help the under-developed nations; we're never going to get those meaningful things across unless somebody like the Kennedys are willing to really pound away at it over and over and over. One of the places where I fault JFK's presidency is that, with all the appeal and the resources and talent he had through television as a public figure, that he really didn't try to change public attitudes on China or on helping the poor, or things like that. So anyway, yes, that's like my Outer Mongolian thing.

HACKMAN: There's never a point when you think he's really treating that seriously, and really...

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DUTTON: Well, Bob finally did, not because of my advice, but he was so emotionally moved by the destitution he saw in Indian reservations, and when Peter got him to go to the Mississippi Delta and things like that, that I think he then did begin to concentrate on certain points. And I think people finally came to see that he really had concern for the very lowest economic groups, and those particular groups came to realize it, too. That really was just the point I was trying to make, but here again, Bob really was not consciously analytical. He had to live it before it really registered.

HACKMAN: You make a lot of suggestions on the use of television. How did he usually respond to those?

DUTTON: Agreed with it. Bob always found television a difficult medium; he never worked it well. I'd always get called out to the house, for example, with his staff—I think I was the only outsider generally—when he'd be going on "Meet the Press" or "Face the Nation" and those.... One, to go over the questions; and two, sort of how we'd handle some. But he never really learned the medium well; there are very few people who have. Reagan [Ronald Reagan], of course, is, Christ, a past master of the damn thing, and he uses it so effectively for his malicious purposes. But Bob, for example, let's see, the day after he announced for the presidency in '68, he was on, I think, "Meet the Press" that day—terrible performance, uptight, tense. We would just try to get him to do a few simple things like smile occasionally and, as you do in your personal meetings, say "Well, that's a silly question" or something else like that. But on "Meet the Press"—"Keep your answers short." For example, Charlie Guggenheim [Charles Guggenheim], who understands the thing so sensitively, Charlie finally quit trying to use him in a "set" environment so that he had to get Bob out and doing, and then he would be all right. His failures were no different from anybody else's, but for a guy with his exposure and publicity, I think it's all the more important that it be used well for the problems he's interested in.

Most politicians, most public figures, have to scramble like hell for exposure; Bob really should be concentrating on the quality and the selectiveness of what he does.

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HACKMAN: Okay. You mentioned Vietnam as one of the things you and Adam occasionally pushed him on. When does that really happen? Can you pinpoint that?

DUTTON: Continuously. [Laughter] No, I can't recall. My impressions of Vietnam.... I was, like almost everybody else, uncritically going along with it all when I was Assistant Secretary of State—and the congressional briefings. It wasn't important—Berlin and Laos, and this and that and everything else like that. I think I got turned on more after the bombing started—when was that?—in March of '65. But I was tepid compared to Adam. I mean Adam was always marching. Even Peter was fairly faded out. And yet I was one of those, in the fall of '67, as the books have, who was one of those not for us getting into the campaign. Even though I was against the war, my substantive concern about the war was overcome by my belief that it could not be pulled off, that it would be divisive for the country and for the Party, and that Bob would be less of an influence if he challenged Johnson and struck out than if he sort of husbanded his influence. But I was absolutely wrong, like a lot of other people. I mean he was somewhat Hamletish, very Hamletish in that period—should he run; shouldn't he run? He wanted to. And here again I think his analytical thing said no, and his emotions said yes, and the political analysis prevailed over and over again.

HACKMAN: One of the things—switching to something else—one of the things you state in one of those memos is that you suggested that Burke Marshall become sort of a personal adviser to the family. Do you remember that?

DUTTON: Yes, I do.

HACKMAN: Why?

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DUTTON: This goes back from the spring of '64, and I think one of the reasons that I had some increasing entrée to Bob was that I'd been bothered by some of the nuances of the family, the family legend, all the talk of the family money, too many members of the family seeking power, and things like that. I guess like lots of people I thought just maybe the Kennedys are too reaching, too acquisitive, too omnipresent, and so forth like that. I used to say that to him, and again, he didn't give me a real reading back. Anyway, I was just concerned for Teddy and Sarge [R. Sargent Shriver] and himself and the girls, that I just felt there should be one person who tried to relate all that. And Burke was the one who really had the confidence of all the various wings—Jackie is an example. In Bob's own career what happens to the Kennedy family was a terribly

important consideration. It was a great source of strength, but it also was a source of negativeness, and it needed to be looked at consciously. Outsiders like myself could never get too close into the family relationships. They had their own short forms of communication and substantial interests, and so forth. So I was always very much an outsider. But I just thought from a political or a public viewpoint that they just needed somebody who was sort of willing to speak his mind on things. [REDACTED]

HACKMAN: Did he ever respond to that?

DUTTON: No.

HACKMAN: Did you bring that up with him specifically ever?

DUTTON: Yes, indirectly. But in most things, or a lot of things, I was as direct or blunt or as explicit as anybody but...

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[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

DUTTON: I think it's just one of those things where I think you had to use some care; you never really knew how the Kennedys felt. By '68 I was close enough to him that I could be fairly critical without getting knocked out of the second floor window.

HACKMAN: What about Shriver? Did he ever show any great concern with Shriver's career?

DUTTON: No. I had no reading with Shriver one way or the other. Bob was always very careful. I think we all have read into what he thought, and I think we read his thoughts and feelings accurately, but with me he was terribly discreet and almost evasive. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Bob, as far as I was concerned, was always properly correct with Johnson. I never heard him call him a son of a bitch,

although I read it in the paper. With me he was always as respectful as I would think that he should be towards the office of the President of the United States. But you could still tell the hostilities down in the boiler room were there.

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HACKMAN: You know, there's one memo in here that you wrote to Moyers on the war, your proposal on Vietnam...

DUTTON: To be honest I don't remember that. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Were there many others like that? I'm just trying to get into your own role...

DUTTON: You see, in the '64 campaign—I basically laid out the campaign—Moyers was Johnson's guy. O'Donnell was for all practical purposes running the Democratic National Committee even though John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] was chairman.

HACKMAN: Right.

DUTTON: I was running the campaign, but O'Donnell and I were "Kennedy people" which always used to frustrate the hell out of us. As far as I was concerned, if I worked for somebody, I'm going to work a 100 percent and try to see that he wins. But Johnson was always wary enough of anybody who happened to have a Kennedy background. But during the '64 period—let's say from June or July of '64 through November—I did a flood of memos to Moyers, but that almost was my job.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Did you get any feedback from the President during that time, any real concern about your ties with Robert Kennedy? Did he get in with the Ed Weisl [Edwin L. Weisl, Sr.] thing, and all this...

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DUTTON: No. Those internal things.... Johnson really didn't take Kennedy people into his confidence. Johnson said to me one day on the phone when he called me up—I don't remember the context—it was to the effect that, "Well, I hope that you'll do just as much (in a very slow deliberate way) just as much for me as you do for those Kennedys." And, frankly, I was annoyed as hell because I would automatically. I mean, one, he was President of the United States; two, I was working for him. And the idea that he sort of had to belabor it almost was questioning your loyalty. He was ham-handed about it. But outside of that there was never anything like that. But he remained so wary of O'Donnell and myself, O'Brien at that stage even—Larry passed the veil later on. We were sort of doing the organizational stuff, but there was a Moyers who was looking over our shoulder. It didn't matter because Bill and I are good friends, and the

relationship couldn't have been better, but Johnson just wants.... And the Kennedys—in fairness, let's say the tables were reversed—JFK and Bob had the same damn way. I mean you sort of had to pass a loyalty and a saliva test. I think that's part of the political animal.

HACKMAN: Anything at the '64 Convention that you can remember, while we're on '64? Didn't you have any conversations with Robert Kennedy at that point?

DUTTON: No, I did not. At that stage I was working about twenty hours a day on the Platform Committee. My emotional reactions enter into it. There's a motel right across the little street from the Convention hall where the White House staff—Moyers and I, and the rest of them—were, and I was working out of that. I had nothing to do with.... I didn't go to the reception that Jackie and Bob held there, but when Bob stood up and spoke there I yelled myself hoarse. I didn't have any voice for two days, so it was obvious where my emotions were. But I had no contact whatsoever.

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HACKMAN: Is there any serious talk at all among Robert Kennedy supporters of taking the vice-presidential nomination?

DUTTON: Not to the best of my knowledge, and I think I would have known about it. I might have been excluded in that period, since I was working so full-time for Johnson. But to the best of my knowledge when Johnson had Bob in his office, and of Bob, I mentioned earlier, called me, as far as I know Bob accepted that as a closed door and went on. There was never going to be a coup or anything else like that. There was talk by sort of low-level political types...

HACKMAN: Paul Corbin.

DUTTON: Yes, junk like that. I think that if Bob had heard Paul that he would have cut him off at the pockets.

HACKMAN: Had you talked to him at all in early '64, when this New Hampshire primary bit and then in Wisconsin, all this noise of Corbin's efforts in New Hampshire?

DUTTON: No, I was never involved. [REDACTED]

HACKMAN: One other thing on '64. After Robert Kennedy has the meeting with Johnson who said, "You're not going to be the vice-presidential nominee," do you know what, if anything, he [Robert F. Kennedy] does on behalf of getting Humphrey the nomination?

DUTTON: No. Kenny O'Donnell could tell you that story in full, and he's going to have it in his book. I had lunch with Kenny up in Boston about six weeks ago, and he went into great detail with this. I gather there is a big story about that, but I was no involved in it. Kenny, in fact, said he has memos on that, which I was not aware of at the time. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: I want to just get a couple things on '68 that seem to be pretty important where your opinion doesn't come out clearly on in the Witcover [Jules Joseph Witcover] thing [book: *85 Days*]. When did Robert Kennedy tell you he was definitely running in '68?

DUTTON: He never did. That is a very confusing period. In fact, I would have to say that I think—I gave Bob a memo on this idea. I'm sure you don't have it because it was on a yellow-type pad.

HACKMAN: It's not there.

DUTTON: What I was thinking of is when Bob went through that silly exercise that Ted Sorensen conjured up of the Vietnam Commission. My analysis is that Bob had already passed over Niagara Falls, could not have retreated if he had wanted to and maintained considerable strength. He'd have looked ridiculous, and it was a fiasco. He was committed, and he was committed probably from the time he gave the damn comment at National Airport the morning after New Hampshire when he was going to New York. He certainly was committed by that night on the Cronkite [Walter Cronkite] show. We had the meeting with Steve Smith that night; I thought Bob realized it that night. I was convinced he was airborne. I thought everybody else was, and I would think any press or member of the public would be. He then went through his Vietnam Commission idea, which I learned about that night first from Teddy and then him. He was

not generally talking about that; he kept that very closely guarded. I couldn't tell whether he thought it was ridiculous, or he was doing something he thought people—those of us who advised him—would criticize him for. In any event, I think that he had made up his mind at National Airport, had given the signal, a signal which he could not recover. And then he goes through the whole thing: here he's got a proposal to the President of the United States, and he's visiting Clark Clifford [Clark M. Clifford]; he'd get out if they'd do this and that. That was Bob, the politician, trying to have his cake and eat it, too. He was trying to get the war over with, which he felt very strongly about at that time, have great influence, and yet not necessarily have to challenge the President. But I always felt—and I wrote him a memo at the time—that was a totally unrealistic operation, which nothing would come of and he would look absurd to the extent it got out. He never told me I was right.

HACKMAN: Who, other than Sorensen, knows about that that you know of?

DUTTON: Sorensen, Teddy, Steve Smith, and myself, as far as I know. Nobody else. Then, you know, there's been a lot in the press that came out.

HACKMAN: You never talked about it later?

DUTTON: Yes, I talked about it a lot later. This is another insight into Bob. When Bob knew you had a strongly held viewpoint on something that he was as much rationalizing his prior conduct as.... It's funny. He'd be so analytical, so detached sometimes, and then he couldn't be other times. Another example, just to illustrate the same characteristic in him was—I mentioned earlier that O'Donnell and I had said for a long time we didn't understand how McNamara could be so dovish and so

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hawkish simultaneously. During the Indiana primary we were in Indianapolis on a Thursday—it was some holiday; I don't know what it was—and we went to the TV studio there with about twenty, twenty-five people. Quite a few of the key campaign, research people and others had flown out from Washington. We were looking at all the rushes on our spots, and for the first time we all saw—in fact, I don't think any of us really knew about—the interview Ted Sorensen did with McNamara. And after we got through seeing them—the lights went back on—Bob asked various people, “What do you think about it?” And he asked me. I said, “I think here you're running against the war, and McNamara's Secretary of Defense, and a lot of people say it's McNamara's war. And he's a cold fish; he doesn't come across on the TV very well.” And Bob said, “Well, you're against him anyway.” At this stage I think that maybe with Teddy, and Steve, and maybe a little bit more so sometimes, I was probably closer than anybody to him in terms of day-to-day advice. And to sort of put me in my place, he picked out, I'll say, four or five guys: Steve, Teddy, and somebody very low level, a perfectly good guy, but just in the pecking order of the moment.... And he said, “Well, we'll go in the other room and discuss the McNamara spot.” And he left me sitting there with egg on my face with these others, which is purely a way of putting me down. My point is simply once you'd taken a strong position with Bob, once you were not sort of the detached counselor, that you were becoming argumentative or heated in your positions, he never really tried after that to dispassionately talk about a position. So anyway, on the Sorensen Commission I thought it was so absurd and said so, maybe too bluntly to begin with. And so he and I never coolly discussed it after that, which is fairly common.

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That's my guess, though, that so many decisions.... This to me is not adequately enough appreciated by either historians or the press. I saw this with Pat Brown at that level, and in the White House with JFK, and I've seen it with so many politicians now. The type of person—and this may be true of a lot of us in our private lives—but so many politicians, particularly, are juggling competing interests and considerations which are tugging and

pulling on them, that they almost don't consciously make decisions. Or they often don't, and decisions are made just by the passage of time. The press tried too hard to pin down when did he decide to run; my guess is he never entirely decided to run. He'd take two steps forward and one step backward, and pretty soon he found he was too far in the tunnel to get out.

HACKMAN: In some ways the press made the decision...

DUTTON: Yes. I tried to make the point to a lot of the press here in town over and over that they have no idea of the number of presidential decisions under Kennedy and Johnson that I know about which were made by them. The staff, the Cabinet members may be arguing a point over and over again; the man will get up before the TV or press conference and he'll say something, and even if he has not made the decision, he can't pull back from it because of something else he said. And more damn staff-work in the White House was disposed of by things Kennedy had said on TV that you couldn't retract.

HACKMAN: Okay. The other thing was can you recall any discussions of the roles that people were to play in the campaign? How did your own role come about, and how much of a problem through the campaign was lack of organization in terms of people?

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DUTTON: In my opinion no trouble was caused by the lack of organization, by the lack of titles and a clearer chart. I happened to have been one of those who advised that course, so I may be biased. We had so many sensitive egos—Sorensen, O'Donnell, O'Brien—so many feuds. We had so many different age groups that to try to decide the relative order would have made more people mad and unhappy. You would have gotten some bad press stories in a short-term sense; in a longer-term sense we would have not had so many people motivated. Bob and I discussed this just ourselves several times, and I assumed that at some stage that he would clarify this, maybe after California, maybe close to the Convention, I don't know. But he was pressed very hard, frankly, by Ted Sorensen at the very outset to clarify this. Ted sort of wanted a bureaucratic chart and clear titles. Normally I think that's needed; there's so much chaos and confusion in a political campaign that you need to keep clarifying all the time. But in this particular one the personalities, the layers of people, the speed with which the thing had come together, didn't allow things to be sorted out, and to have done the other would have been trouble. As far as who got what jobs were concerned, here again Bob was asking each of us, "What would you like to do" or, "What do you think you should be doing?" asking other people, "What do you think Sorensen should be doing? What do you think vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] should be doing?" in his way. And he'd do it with lots of people. I think it finally got down to there was a discussion a Saturday night out there with Steve, Teddy, Bob, maybe one or two others, maybe Sorensen. I was not involved in it, in any event. I had sort of assumed that.... In '60 I had more or less run the headquarters here in Washington with Bob. I was a very much lower level guy, but I had been the guy sort of in charge of it because I'd

run the California campaign, and he knew it. I assumed that I would be working in the Washington headquarters. He asked various people to do things, and I guess that evening over the course of two or three hours—here's somebody who's going to do this; somebody's going to do that—he finally came to me. And in a most offhanded way he said, "I'd like to have you travel with me. I hope you don't mind." And I said, "No." To be quite frank with you, though, it was so uncertain that I thought, "Well, I'll

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travel a few days and then I'll go to the headquarters." There was no definite thing. We went out then. In fact, we did two or three trips. And at one point I decided that, well, hell, I'd been gone from Washington too much—I still had my law office, that I should get back to that—and was going to take myself off the campaign plane. And I didn't realize until then that Bob expected me to travel full-time with him and work the thing. It's only relevant or interesting in terms of here again decisions were not conscious, explicit, laid out in detail.

The Sorensen role was Ted finally ended up working here in the Washington office. The relationship of what Teddy, what Steve, what Sorensen, what others had was never sorted out. At one point, three or four weeks into the campaign, Tom Johnston [Thomas M. Johnston], the young guy who'd run his New York office, was terribly unhappy, was going to quit, and sort of had a temper tantrum. I hadn't known Tom—it was on a Sunday, and I was just in headquarters trying to understand what was going on there when we were out around the country—and Tom was just unhappy as hell, and he didn't feel he had enough title and prestige. He finally partly chose, and I guess—I wasn't involved in it—got exiled to North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Kentucky, or some places like that. O'Donnell and Sorensen, for example, had fights over who had which state to control the delegates on. There were frictions; there were problems, without any questions. The hurriedness with which the thing got put together just, I thought, made more work than we could do, was bound to see people getting on each other's toes; there were so many rivalries and hostilities. The classic example, I think, is in probably all three of those books. It was the night before Bob announced, and we were out at Hickory Hill. Sorensen, Schlesinger, and Adam were all three trying to be the number one speechwriter about the thing, and that was one of the funnier episodes of American politics, three generations of them. And Bob was—and I see this in so many other situations—was not going to choose among them, at least in that situation. I gather this reshuffling of the White House by Nixon recently, I guess,

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is the same damn thing. You really don't want to choose one; each of us almost wants the immediate environment in which he's working to be pretty good. I found myself being cowardly, let's say, between a couple of secretaries, some sort of who's number one and all that kind of crap. A black girl quit me recently because I didn't make her over Jeannie Main [Jean M. Main], the first girl out there, and stuff like that. People around Presidents and Senators are the same way, they don't want to make close-in decisions which hurt people. So the confusion partly goes with politics, partly went with the hurriedness of this particular operation, partly went with the unusual personalities that were being pulled together here.

HACKMAN: The other thing is how much of a problem is funds and fundraising in the '68 campaign?

DUTTON: The only person you really, I think, could get any accurate story from on that would be Steve. I generally try to stay out of campaign financing. With the Kennedys there's no point getting involved in it at all.

Fundraising was very difficult. I knew a little bit about the California situation, and everybody says, "Well, hell, the Kennedys got so damn much money why don't they put it up themselves?" So it's not easy to get. Then, I think, that frankly the thing was being put together so hurriedly, so many things to do, that Steve sort of let that one drag by and think, "Well, after California I'll sort of tidy up," and he didn't do it. Steve's another guy—great political judgment, great instincts—he's known as a great political organizer, and yet he's not at all.

HACKMAN: Are there any?

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DUTTON: No, there're not. I'm not sure that politics lends itself to that that much. I gather the Republicans do this in a tidier way, but I think they're a tidier culture. I do think to the extent that, as I said earlier, you can give assignments and sort it out, you should because the confusion is incredible. You're working under deadlines, egos, changing facts, and attacks by the opposition. And if you don't have some lines straightened out, you've really bought yourself a lot of trouble.

HACKMAN: Yes. That's why my question about assignments was really more how much of a problem did people down below or people in the field have knowing who to go to, more than the layer.

DUTTON: Oh, I see what you mean. I don't know; you'd have to ask them. I would think they would have some troubles. Let's say that I was an Indiana politician, and I wanted to sort of hook up with the Kennedys. I don't know whether I'd have gone to John Douglas [John W. Douglas], who Bob sent out there to try to straighten it out; or Jerry Doherty [Gerald F. Doherty], who Teddy sent out, who's really the campaign manager in name; or Teddy and Steve, who were floating around, or what. So much in political campaigns, in my opinion, is almost a question of who controls the access: for a President, who the appointments' secretary is, whether it's Pa Watson [Edwin M. Watson] for Roosevelt [Franklin Delano Roosevelt], or O'Donnell, or Bob Haldeman [H. R. Haldeman] now. Again it gets down to such mechanical things as just who has the door, who has the schedule, who has the telephone. For example, I think, with Sorensen and Teddy and Steve, sitting back here I would have said as campaign manager, I came closer to it than one of the three. Without being egotistical, I think I probably had more influence only because I was on the scene; where he was, I was traveling. Some things I was

not involved in, but it's a highly fluid, mobile, quick-responding operation; it's the old thing—who's got the body, almost.

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HACKMAN: You may not be able to answer this, but people in talking about Oregon have talked about E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., had an assignment out there, and then vanden Heuvel going in. Can you remember, in the early stages of the campaign, looking to anyone who really had operational responsibility for Oregon?

DUTTON: Yes. As far as Bob was concerned, I think I can safely say, and as far as I was concerned, Barrett Prettyman had it originally.... Well, no, here we are: Barrett Prettyman had it, and Edith Green had it. Mrs. Green is the one in the state, and Barrett is, let's say, our guy on the scene. The first time that we went into Oregon, which is almost that first weekend, the weekend after the week of the announcement—I came up from California—Barrett and Herb Schmertz were our two people. And it was obvious that they were overworked; they were inexperienced. Bob at that stage had a tendency to rely on Mrs. Green [Edith S. Green]. She knows the state; she's here; she's been a long time; she has an organization; we should rely on her. That was a mistake, and the Kennedys should be the first ones to know it and I should have, that you always have your own people.

The local person has got to protect themselves, can't do everything, has enemies within the Party. Mrs. Green really doesn't get out of Portland, and things like that. Here we were probably too fast, too many things to do, being neglectful, tired from just traveling. Barrett had it, was not adequate. We knew it at that stage. Bob, I think from a hotel—I forget whether Eugene or Salem—called Steve, I think it was, and said we had to get more bodies out there. After that—I don't know when; I think Steve was the moving party—Bill vanden Heuvel was sent out.

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One of our problems was lots of our key people, who normally would go in there if they weren't tied up elsewhere, were putting so much emphasis on Indiana and California. Some like Jerry Bruno, who's so damn good in advance work and stuff like that, he was persona non grata with Mrs. Green. And her distemper precluded some of our key people. But the fault was essentially, as far as I'm concerned, Bob's and Steve's and mine. Our organization wasn't gelling, and we should have known it. I think there were plenty of signs, and we were just looking too much at other things. And then at the end, the last ten days, we practically poured everybody into there. It was too late; you couldn't turn it around. Yet the interesting thing is that where organization is such a superficial thing in politics now, or organizational effort was lousy right up to the very end, the Saturday before the election, the Monday before the election. In Oregon we were having the worst goddamned rallies. I was screaming and bad-tempered and everything else like that. We weren't getting events far enough ahead; the advance men weren't going in; the crowds weren't good. With one or two exceptions the thing just was not going together. At that stage Steve Smith had been up there

a week. Joe Dolan was running scheduling. We had everybody except the kitchen sink in there, and it still didn't go together. I think that you could say that our organizational ineptness may have made the difference, but the more fundamental explanation is that there is not a big black population, not a big Catholic population, not problems, things like that. Bob Kennedy's no good in that kind of setting. These to me are more solid explanations.

HACKMAN: Let me just ask about the Witcover book. Is it your impression that he talked much more with you and reflects your point of view a lot more than other peoples'? Or, do you know how much other interviewing he did?

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DUTTON: No, I don't know. He interviewed me I'd guess three times for an hour and a half each about—an hour, and hour and a half each. A lot of stuff in it is mine; a lot of it isn't. Jules is sort of a vacuum cleaner, journeyman reporter. I don't know this, but I assume that he interviewed a hell of a lot of people like he did me, and Jules puts together all kinds of facts without an awful lot of depth of analysis. What I'd say is I think that Witcover's book is more of a traditional journalistic effort and would include people like me as a somewhat conventional type, whereas Jack Newfield's which I like so much, is essentially a Walinsky viewpoint and Jack's own interpretive views. A beautiful book... [Inaudible]

HACKMAN: I don't want to go over all this stuff with you if you gave it to Witcover... [Interruption]

DUTTON: ... oral history. To the extent you're trying to put together a composite picture of what a Kennedy campaign looks like, from all different levels or all different people, it's useful to make those interviews. In terms of really decisions or influence, or so forth, my own guess is that for some people it's a tremendous ego-fulfillment and not very accurate; they have no sense of how little a role they played.

HACKMAN: Yes. You've got to weed out an awful lot and throw it away automatically; there are only certain kinds of questions really that you can ask and count on...

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DUTTON: A Kennedy campaign—and I think this is true of most campaigns increasingly—is they're now so highly centralized that you go out and you talk to the Unruhs and other state-level people and so forth like that. But the Kennedys themselves will decide or the Nixon group nationally will decide it. This didn't used to be true in the Roosevelt-Truman [Harry S. Truman] period and earlier American history, or the Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] period even, where I got active. But now almost the '60 campaign taught us that you send your own people in. The local people you

want to hold their hands, and you want their hands, and you want their labor, but they're really not involved in the decisions.

The extent of centralization and this stuff now is incredible; it goes with television really I think. Jess is a good example—and I'm trying to help him on his gubernatorial thing right now, although he's not going to get off the ground, I guess. Jess, you know, I think he was very influential on Bob going in; Bob trusted that poll he sent and everything else like that, and we really relied on him to begin with. But, as a lot of people have written, Jess just couldn't produce; he didn't have the horses. The interesting thing now that Jess is running for governor himself is absolutely everybody he tried to give Bob he's fired from his staff, changed over. I've been to a few meetings with him the last six months, and he's bringing in a whole different team. His operational activity in the spring of '68 was about zero; his own schedule shows he was out of the state most of the time. And the people that he gave us or put in charge just were no good. Jess didn't know it at that time; he knocked Steve and Mankiewicz and a lot of people who came in like that. He would have knocked me if I had been there except I was traveling around.

HACKMAN: Why does he handle it that way?

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HACKMAN: How does that situation get solved finally in '68, or does it?

DUTTON: It finally got solved in the way the Kennedys try to solve everything, and that was just moving everybody else in. Steve was living in Los Angeles and running the program, the show, trying to be real nice to the guy that Jess had there. I forget his name right now, a nice guy himself. Art...

HACKMAN: Seltzer [Arthur Seltzer].

DUTTON: Seltzer, yes, whom I had hired to work in Brown's campaign in '66. And Art was perfectly good, but he was, let's say, used to organizational things or working a particular county. And to be given all of southern California is more than he was prepared for really. But it was just that Smith, Joe Dolan, Jerry Bruno,

Frank Mankiewicz, George Plimpton, Arthur Schlesinger, and about a hundred and fifty others...

HACKMAN: All the horses on the track.

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DUTTON: Yes, just saturated the state. Jess's thing finally ended up nothing really, and that was when Jess started putting out his stories of all these Easterners moving in on us: "They blew it; that's the reason," and stuff like that. It's so silly for him to be quarreling with Steve Smith, the brother-in-law; it doesn't do any good.

HACKMAN: Was there any big debate on what groups you campaigned for in California? Can you remember getting involved in that kind of thing, whether you go to the minority groups or whether you try to spend your time...

DUTTON: No, I basically laid out the schedule. In fact, the only time I wasn't traveling with Bob was for about three days in—God, I don't know when, I guess mid-May, or something like that—when Steve asked me to come out and lay out all the rest of the California campaign. I did that just pretty much out of my own experience. We had an argument at the very beginning. Jess was advocating that we should spend a hell of a lot of time in the San Fernando Valley, and I was arguing—this was not a Kennedy thing so much as just me as a California politician—"Where are the Democratic votes in California?" We emphasized the Mexicans and the blacks a little bit more, I think, than you might in the normal Democratic campaign, but not all that much in fairness.

Jess was, as far as I was concerned—and I criticized it at the time—was really having his go where there were no particular votes, but where he got money sources or he had friendly Democratic legislators, where you wouldn't get a gubernatorial or a senatorial or a presidential vote of any proportions. Then the other thing was that if there was a shift from the past patterns in California, as we get deeper into a television age, your white literate population you reach in spots and so forth, your less educated lower economic groups you need to reach first-hand. Whites are almost bothered; they don't need, they don't want the personal relationship, unless it's in a fancy hotel ballroom. The blacks and the Mexicans, et cetera, do. And we were adjusting to that, working the whites with television, working the minority groups first-hand. Jess at one stage, I think fairly early, knocked that. I didn't see him at the end.

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Jess at one point told us, "You can't get Mexican-Americans out; they never come in the street," and, "You can't do motorcading in California," which I must admit I'd heard for years. Well, we had such sensational motorcades for Bob in '66, and in the other states that

we just went to that automatically. We overdid it, partly because Bob loved it. I mean the physical touching was like a couple of drinks; he flourished. People have quoted him that—let's say, we started going to a Negro sector of a town in Omaha or L.A. or Columbus, Ohio, and Bob would see the first little patch of people down the street and he'd say, "Those are my people." He'd just light up; he's suddenly come out of whatever morbid state he was in at the time.

HACKMAN: How does money work in California in '68? Does Unruh get any, or does he have to....

DUTTON: Jess in the California campaign was supposed to raise some. They had a finance chairman; I think it was Lou Warschaw [Louis Warschaw], I'm not sure. There was some money raised. Carmen Warschaw [Carmen H. Warschaw] had that benefit in the sports arena.

HACKMAN: It's a bust, isn't it? Or maybe it's another one I'm thinking of.

DUTTON: No, it must be another one you're thinking of. That one was—I don't know how papered that house was—it was jam-packed.

HACKMAN: I'm thinking of one Salinger put together at one point. I don't know if you remember that one. Somebody told me that.

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DUTTON: Yes, Salinger did put one together; I forget that. No, the one that Carmen put together in the sports arena was 70,000 people, jam-packed—I would say 90 percent sold, not free tickets. That was very good. But California campaigns are so damned expensive—twenty million people, eight million electorate, almost all television, no organization. I was talking about this yesterday: A Senate seat in California now would cost a million and a half to two million dollars; a gubernatorial campaign would cost two and a half to three and a half million; a presidential primary would cost two and a half to four million. So you raise a quarter of a million or a half a million dollars; it doesn't advance you very far. Just like I had lunch with Ted Sorensen yesterday, and he was talking about running for the Senate. The Senate campaign in New York costs one and a half to three million dollars. Boy, that really takes a lot of dough. The California primary in '68 just didn't raise that much money; it was a drop in the bucket beside what was needed. You could more than run a campaign in most of the states, but it doesn't get you anywhere there really. There again, as far as I know, it was essentially Steve who was handling the financial problems; so it must have been family money.

HACKMAN: Were there many things throughout the campaign that you were pressing on Robert Kennedy that he doesn't do? How would you have tried to change the direction?

DUTTON: No. The first big argument I guess we had was—not me, but the campaign had, he had—was over how tough do you go on Johnson. That first week when he went out, he went real tough. They wrote he was sort of letting loose everything that was inside of him, and some of them—Dick Harwood [Richard Lee Harwood] and others—wrote that he was almost being a demagogue, or very close to it.

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So the first argument was how tough do you go on Johnson. The second argument was how much do you go into crowds and things like that. One was the danger question; two was the bad television, too much turbulence and tumult, so forth like that. The next real big question, after Johnson withdrew, was what are your issues? How do you handle it? The next really big and prolonged question was, how do you handle Indiana with Adam, Peter and the younger guys more idealistic, saying that we've got to tell Indiana it's racist and shape up? And we're going to talk racial reconciliation. Some people, Teddy and others, with urging that you had to recognize the conservative nature of the state and talk more law and order. I came down more with the latter group. Since I was traveling with Bob, my own manner of operating was to hold back myself and not plunge in until I heard.... A candidate shouldn't have close to him a person who has too vehement an advocate; he should be trying to sort of balance, too.

Bob got some criticism in the press for shifting to more of a law and order approach. The truth of the matter is, in my opinion—I'm writing this over and over; I'm not sure if some people believe it—the decision to do more law and order was not consciously made, but was made that that's what the crowds responded to. Bob used to argue with Adam sometimes, or try to, and Adam said, "Gee, you've got to quit talking about that." Bob would say, "Well, I'm balancing it," and we could take any sentence or paragraph in his speeches and he did balance it. But Bob would say to Adam, "You go up there before the crowd." He said, "I'll talk racial reconciliation for ten minutes, and it's cold as can be. I'll talk about we've got to pull this country together again. We've got to enforce the law, and they'll break loose. Now are we trying to win votes, or are we trying to drop dead here?" That was to me the most explicit debate of some substance that we had in the campaign.

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Most of the stuff that I did was—you'd pulled in these larger questions, but minorly I thought we did real well. Part of it is keeping his own psychology buoyed up; part of it was you really need to be hitting something different. I was always supposed to be briefing ahead. The research group would feed me the cards and so forth; so part of it was purely informational briefing. Part of it was a critique of his immediate effort, how good he was, not trying to be cold-blooded, analytical. That you could do when you're back in the campaign headquarters; when you're on the road I think you've got to keep the horse running.

HACKMAN: How adequately did the research operation in the '68 campaign work?

DUTTON: It left a hell of a lot to be desired. I thought it was as good as I've seen campaign research operations. The essential problem there is people like

Peter and others have never really been too much in a campaign on the road, or a national campaign. They'll sit in Washington and they'll feed you cards; it's too cold; it's too distant. It's the same problem you see in campaigns over and over again where academicians and some writers and so forth will feed you speeches, and they're damn good speeches, and they're well-written, but at a minimum, they're not in the cadence and style of the guy who's going to deliver it. Two, they're not aimed at an audience in Terre Haute, Indiana or Fresno, California. The politician is always trying to relate with specific individuals, and most of the research is sort of abstract, informational, or quasi-intellectual. It's awful hard. The way it was solved in the '60 campaign is the right one, and that is two or three researchers—it was Goodwin then—and a speechwriter like Sorensen just goes along, and you write it. Adam and our speechwriters, for some reason, they found exhausting just the traveling around. This was

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partly their inexperience. They made up in brains what they lacked in political experience, but they were not that productive on the road. Bob used to bitch a lot about it, and it was both a joke and a tension as we traveled around.

HACKMAN: Are there any other things from '64 to '68 that you got involved in that you haven't talked about? Is there anything you become operational on, anything you handle for him or the family, or anything like that?

DUTTON: No. Basically between '64 and '68 he was Senator, and I was practicing law. I'd see him a few times, but, no, I was not getting that close nor intending to. I put down my two cents worth in memos and let it ride that way. No, Peter and Adam were the ones really who had the insight to that period.

HACKMAN: Well, there might be some other things....

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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