**John Herling Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/30/1966**
Administrative Information

**Creator:** John Herling
**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey
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**Biographical Note**
Herling was a journalist and the publisher of *John Herling's Labor Letter* from 1950 to 1990. In this interview Herling discusses John F. Kennedy [JFK] as part of the House Labor Committee headed by Andrew Jacobs; JFK's understanding of labor issues; Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] and JFK as part of the McClellan Committee [U.S. Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor and Management]; RFK's dinner with Edward Cheyfitz and James Hoffa and the attempted infiltration of the McClellan Committee; McClellan Committee hearings; George Meany testifying before the subcommittee on labor affairs of the Senate Labor and Education Committee and JFK's reaction; labor unions' support for JFK in the 1960 presidential campaign; the 1960 Democratic National Convention; Lyndon B. Johnson asking for labor support right before the 1960 Convention; the negative reaction to Johnson as the vice-presidential candidate from labor delegates; JFK and the Landum-Griffin Bill; and covering JFK's 1960 campaign, among other issues.

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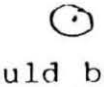 period

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Oral History Interview

with

JOHN KEATING

March 30, 1966
National Archives Building,
Sound Studio
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

KEATING: I think perhaps the best way to start thinking back about President Kennedy and his interest in labor affairs, which is primarily mine in this area, is to recall the first time I ever saw him as a member of the House Labor Committee. This occurred sometime -- it must have occurred in 1947, which was his first term in Congress, at a time when the first exposures were developing in the field of corrupt activities in the trade union movement. These exposures or exposés were often exaggerated by people who didn't care whether unions were honest or

not; profoundly they professed their disinterest. But nevertheless the feeling was that this made a better story. But at least the key person at this time in this area of expose was Westbrook Pegglar, (?).

Now Jack Kennedy at that time was a young Congressman as a member of the sub-committee of the House Labor Committee headed by Andrew Jacobs of Indianapolis. I believe his son now, Andy Jacobs, Jr., is a Congressman too. Jacobs' background -- he's very carefully pointed out that the original family name was Jacquor. Jacobs was really sort of an anglicized version of it. This indicated, of course, he was not Jewish. At any rater Jacobs was going after certain types of what he thought were ~~pp~~ misfeasances in the carpenters' union especially and perhaps also in the laborers, he having represented, I think, some local carpenters' unions against the hierarchy, the top notch people in the carpenters' international

At any rate, for some reason or other the hearings were held at night. Perhaps there was a rule against having hearings while Congress was in session which sometimes obtains now in the case of the Senate. But at any rate I went up because the witness was going to be Westbrook Pegglar. Jacobs was there as chairman of the sub committee. John Kennedy was a member. I don't recall the names of the other two. For all I know it.. . . Well, I better not guess here. That could be checked in the record and should be. Half way through the testimony of Pegglar, however, suddenly Jack Kennedy made a move if not of disgust, but of disdain at the way the questioning was going. With Pegglar sitting there and Pegglar reliciting all kinds of responses and ridiculing some of the Congressmen sitting up there, John Kennedy felt that he wanted no part of this operation.

Half way through he stepped down and declared himself out as a member of the sub committee. I recall that I was a little bit mystified by this act. I never checked with him to find out what had really happened. There must have been some movement behind the scenes here that one doesn't know about at this time. Perhaps Andy Jacobs may dredge this up from his own, "I fear me", prejudiced mind.

After Jacobs, May I say parenthetically -- I think he was a one lunger there, one term man -- ~~kind of this~~ he then began to represent more actively some of the dissident carpenters' locals against the international. So there was a vested interests here operating which, perhaps, Mr. Kennedy might have felt he wanted no part of. At the same time, one had a feeling he wasn't about to insight the journalistic wrath of Westbrook Pogglar by seeming to side with some of his colleagues on the committee, one of whom said actually that he had been a

member of the laborers' union. At that time the laborers' union had not had an international convention for almost ~~20~~ thirty years. So that this was not exactly the beau ideal of what a trade union should be like. But whatever the motivations were for Jack Kennedy, this did stick out in my mind. And at that time he had that yellow caste that came from the malaria, I think, of the his Pacific exposure. He seemed at the time not at all the vigorous man that he came to be and to appear to be later on.

MORRISSEY: Did he seem to understand the problems of labor?

HERLING: At that point, I'm not sure, and that's something I want to look into myself in this area. I think he understood the importance of the trade unions politically in Massachusetts.

He understood that it was valuable to have certain labor bodies, certain trade union groups. The building trades, of course, were part really of the Democratic machine in Massachusetts. When he ran in this primary, I'm not sure that he had labor support, but he did seek it, I think, in the campaign that followed. However, I don't speak out of firsthand knowledge in this particular area.

I was never sure.. . . We now leap lightly over quite a number of years, perhaps a decade, here, because my contact with the Kennedys was not continuous. I remember seeing [Robert F.] Bob Kennedy before the, well, he turned out to be one of the young men, one of the counsul, in the McCarthy Committee. My recollection of that was only at a hearing. I think he was involved in the use of ships in the China trade. That

was about all. The next time after that when I saw Bob was when there was confusion in early 1957 between the Government Operations Committee and the Senate Labor Committee as to which would have jurisdiction for an investigation of malfeasance, malpractice in labor management relations. That was when they developed this accomadation of committees, a joint committee which became the Special Committee headed [John L.] by McClellan. Bob was made the general counsel.

x I must say I did not feel at the time too much.. . . No, I want to go back. I remember seeing Bob Kennedy and greeting him and so on and I don't recall when we were actually introduced. But as a newspaper man the introductions are sort of casual in Washington a so that you meet a fellow one day and you're buddy, buddy the next. But I do

remember in 1956 at, I think, a political science meeting at the Mayflower Hotel, there was a big dinner -- no, no of the Democrats. The Democrats had a great big dinner there. All kinds of people were there; all kinds of vice presidential hopefuls were there gathered. The whole problems was who was Adlai [E.] Stevenson going to have for his vice president. This must have been in the spring of 1956. I ~~saw~~ may that Hubert [H.] Humphrey was somebody that most of us in the labor field knew more than anybody else. But I had ~~begun to~~ become interested in John Kennedy as a person because of some of his speeches on the floor of the Senate in general in foreign affairs rather than in the labor movement and so on -- labor management relations particularly or specifically. ~~But~~

But I was discomforted by the fact that Bob Kennedy's close friend --Rapp-- that evening was none other than Edward Cheyfitz, whom I knew quite well because he was a confidant at that time of [David Sol] Dave Beck, the head of the Teamsters Union. I think that Bob could have was enclosed gotten into a bad situation there because Cheyfitz was a very engaging fellow holding out all the dazzling prospects of all kinds of support and was quite ready to speak for the labor movement without any power, any authority, or even without the general wisdom to do so. There was every reason to suppose that his background and so on was impeccable because he was an assistant for awhile to Eric Johnson, the head of the Motion Picture Association. He actually had become his assistant years before when Eric Johnson was US Chamber of Commerce President.

I must say my face literally fell when I suddenly realized Bob Kennedy treated Cheyfitz seriously. Now I can see why in Washington you treat anybody with a certain amount of awareness, but this seemed to be beyond -- this was not merely a circumspect relationship.

Now actually in early '57 when the hearings began and Beck was being checked into and the Teamsters were being investigated and [James] Hoffa was about to be brought on the stand, this was the time that there occurred a rather interesting situation. This was the case of a man named Cheasty [?] who had been allegedly -- and whom I'm convinced was, and swore that he was -- asked later on by Hoffa to move in as counsel on this committee. While this infiltration process was going on, Chefitz wanted Bob Kennedy to get to know Jimmy Hoffa. Cheyfitz had Hoffa

and Kennedy over at his house for a very fancy dinner, I'm told, wines and all -- and even, as they say, demitasses that corrupt the working classes! But Bob by this time knew about the attempted infiltration. Hoffa didn't know that Bob knew, so this really was one of the most interesting dinners in Washington. It was a dinner a trois, and the intimacy was apparently real, but each of them was looking down the other's throat. Verification for detail is available in several accounts of the Times, and I wrote something about it as well. So that by that time, of course, I just want to make it clear that Bob Kennedy understood that Cheyfitz was no friend of the people, as he understood the people's interests to be.

It was interesting at the McClellan Committee how seriously Senator Kennedy took his duties. He came in very well prepared. He stayed a certain consecutive length of time, but his attendance, as I recall it, was not daily or inevitable.

But he made sure that when he came to a session he was very well prepared and very well briefed, as well as you might be. The point is it wasn't automatic that because Bob Kennedy, his brother, was the general counsel, but because you had a feeling he had a concern and an interest in this area. He saw the importance of this thing. He saw the emerging importance of this whole area of endeavor.

At this time I won't go into the detail, if you won't mind, of the McClellan Committee hearing because here, I think what I would like to do sometime would be to give you at least the byproduct of documentation that is contained in my labor letters and some of my columns. I would either append them if I have extra copies or you might have them.

One of the interesting aspects of the hearings so far as I recall -- I recall one incident in particular. As the testimony was

gauss
gathered and as witnesses appeared and as they appeared with their lawyers of high and low degree, it became clear that the lawyers were not merely ordinary representatives of their clients. It went beyond the client-lawyer relationship which no one quarrels with. At one time, as a matter of fact, after the testimony in this area had developed quite clearly, Senator Kennedy early in that session deplored the actions and practice of certain lawyers who appeared with their clients ostensibly as lawyers but whom he felt ~~9~~ I think I quote actually -- were in collusion with them to avoid: one, proper access to the committee; and two, to violate the law. Whether or not this phrase is exact here, I don't recall, but he did mention various names, including Herman Cooper (?), a lawyer in New York who has represented quite a number of unions. I think he also mentioned

Edward (And I think) Everett Bennett Williams (2). There were a couple of others who were involved there. He made quite a drive on this thing. Now this is one area too where there may might be some other interviewees who will give you more dope on it, but I do remember following hhis up. When Senator Kennedy wrote a letter to Charles Ryan of the American Bar Association. As a matter of fact, I had asked the Senator whether or not he was going to follow up on this or merely be content with the statement to the committee record. He wrote a letter to Charles Ryan, then president of the American Bar Association, and asked him what was he going to do about it, And does the American Bar Association feel that their prestige and status and everything else involved, and ought they not get their committee on eithic going? Charlie Ryan was very indignant.

I caught him one day at the airport and he said, "Jack Kennedy is just shooting his mouth off. If he has any evidence about this let him produce it," and so on. There upon there was an unlimited exchange of letters between them. Senator Kennedy told me later on that there was plenty of evidence. He sent several volumes of the hearings up to Mr. Ryan's office. But the important thing here is he was willing to get hold one of the sacred bulls, so to speak, of this area. After all, many of his colleagues in the Senate were also lawyers and would tremble, would avoid doing this kind of thing even though they knew the justification for it. So he was quite fearless and direct and matter of fact about this thing, feeling that lawyers ought not wrap themselves up in the cloak of sanctity which in his mind seemed to be a kind of obscene operation.

As I told you, Mr. Morrissey, this is bits and pieces. We have no scenario here. But one day.. . . back in 1958... Senator Kennedy was also chairman of the sub committee on Labor Affairs of the Senate Labor and Education Committee. ~~He carried on.~~ He was conducting hearings on what type of legislation should be developed in order to ensure a proper safeguard of members' rights and of union prerogatives in view of the emerging evidence that there was the need for a certain type of protection here for members and unions. At that time President George Meany of the AFL-CIO was one of the witnesses. He was reading a long paper on this thing. In effect he was saying that yes, in the labor movement, there was a need for certain areas of protection. He mentioned the trusteeship area and other areas, other sectors of internal government in the union area. Then Mr. Kennedy very earnestly

with no irony at all, said, "What do you think of certain ideas that were advanced by a staff of experts that this committee had?" Meany fired back very rudely, very rudely, very crudely, sort of annoyedly, at the idea: one, at being interrupted by the Senator, and second, at the idea that the Senator suggested this alternative, or perhaps addendum to what Meany was saying. So as I say, he talked rather toughly whereupon the Senator said, "Well, let me tell you, Mr. Meany, that this has been proposed by some of labor's best friends." Whereupon Meany looked up and glared and bit off his cigar and said, "God protect me from our friends," looking squarely at Kennedy. Kennedy leaned forward. It was the first time I had ever seen a kind of controlled anger on his face in public. When Meany said, "God, protect me from our friends," Kennedy looked at him and said, "I think so, too." I think those were about the

words he said. It was really quite a sensation for the day. It was a piece of bad management on the part of Meany, I thought.

At any rate, I remember when the session broke up, Kennedy walked out with a somewhat flushed face. He got hold of Bob Oliver (?) who at that time was a legislative representative of the Industrial Union Department -- he was the first labor guy he saw outside in the car -- and I heard him say ~~he said~~, "I just want you to go back and tell Meany this! I may never run for any higher office, but I am a Senator of the United States, and I'm Chairman of this sub committee, and I'm going to be this for a long, long time. This is not the way to behave." He was really quite incensed. Now the only thing is it indicated also a lack of knowledge of the insides of the labor movement. For him to tell this to Bob Oliver was ~~playing~~ to play into the hands of the enemy. Bob Oliver was

actually the legislative representative of the IUD, not because he was such great shucks, although he did have an oil working union background, but because he was a friend of Lyndon Johnson having come from Texas. So there was a certain amount of "joy in Mudville" to feel that there was a break, perhaps, between Mr. Meany and the labor movement -- although Mr. Meany, of course, couldn't speak for the entire movement -- and Jack Kennedy. What political repercussions ever flowed from that I don't know, but of course may I say that within a year or two -- a year and a half -- and long before that, whatever harshness of language was used by Mr . Meany was nullified by events and appreciation. Later on by 1960 and the critical preconvention days, there was no problem at all that Mr. Meany would support Mr. Kennedy. As a matter of

fact, the support was whole-souled in spite of pressures from the Johnson people which was very severe and personal at the time.

At any rate, I might just add a personal, perhaps self-serving account of something else to indicate the kind of man the Senator was in those days. I went back to my office, and I wrote a column on Mr. Meany in which I really criticized him rather sharply for his attitude, his language. It wasn't merely a matter of infringements of Emily Post sensibilities, but it was just bad politics. It was bad testimony as a result and so on. I was working late the night my column appeared, and I called home to say not to hold dinner for me. My wife said to me, to "guess who just called me?" I said, "I don't know. I have no idea." She said, "Senator Kennedy, and as a matter of fact he asked for you. But since you weren't home, he said, 'Well, I'd rather talk to you anyhow Mrs. Herling.'"

She said, "He talked for fifteen, twenty minutes and said all kinds of nice things and what courage it took because after all, and so on. You cover labor and what not." Well, all this, of course was a pleasant exaggeration; it took no courage at all. But nevertheless this was an example of the Kennedy approach in this area. He did understand the subtleties of the situation to the extent that by my taking the position of this sort, it might result in doors being closed and so on. Well, there was no doubt that certain frowns were directed toward me later on by various people, but no permanent harm was done there either. But that was one of the rather pleasant byproducts of that. It certainly, I think, converted my wife to the Kennedy position.

I do recall also — let me see. . . In late June when the gathering of the clan took place in Los Angeles and all kinds of labor support was being developed for Kennedy and sought after, one of the things that disturbed Senator Kennedy was the opposition of the machinists and certain other people like Cy Anderson, who at that time represented some of the railroad unions. Pretty obviously the railroad unions were very much closer to [Stuart] Symington and as an alternative to Symington to Johnson and/or Humphrey than they were to Kennedy. You must recall that the unions also have kind of a grand old large background. There was a kind of strong traditional Masonic anti-Catholic feeling about this. So that they did not cotton ~~(2)~~ This was the usual holdover at that time of prejudice in many areas. This is not to say that these unions were unanimously one way or another, but their leadership very often acted as if they

But in 1960 there were, I would say, between 150 and 200 delegates and alternate delegates who came from the trade union movement, which was quite a block. Lyndon Johnson was terribly anxious to get their support. And one night -- I think it was the Sunday night before the Convention opened -- he asked George Meany and Andy Biemiller and Al Zack (?), who's director of relations of AFL-CIO, to come over to see him. I would think that he actually called for Meany and maybe Biemiller, but Zack was there too. There was a heated eyeball to eyeball conference for about an hour and one half, two hours, between them with Johnson pleading and asking for all kinds of support, recalling every favor done for labor people and recalling legislation that he supported as majority leader and so on -- the usual and politically proper bit. They

They came back and I was told at the time -- I was given a run down of what happened. The firmness with which Mr. Meany held off against the onslaught -- very emotional and very intense -- was really interesting to listen to. There was no doubt that on the floor of the Convention many of the cope (?) people by this time, for the first time, President Meany gave them a kind of unofficial "go ahead." Because theroretically, of course, the trade unions are not supposed to be officially in any of the conventions. But he allowed them to go ahead, expecially since, of course, by this time Walter Reuther and the Auto Workers in Michigan and so on had long before made their positions very clear about Senator Kennedy. Certainly after the West Virginia primary the Auto Workers who were somewhat divided up in Wisconsin were no longer divided. They went along with Walter Reuther and went along with [G. Mennen] Soapy Williams who, in effect, was the theoretical

leader of the state delegation.

Of course, on this you have a great deal. The dismay in the labor camp when Kennedy announced the selection of Lyndon Johnson as vice president was just unbelievable, incredulous. People were pale with rage and frustration. I do recall this. Walter Reuther did not tell me this at that time, but somebody who was there did say that when they came to see John Kennedy that morning, Kennedy said, "I'm going to have to offer the vice presidency to Lyndon Johnson." Whereupon Walter said, "Alright, but don't make it too urgent." He said,"I can see why you may have to offer it to him, but don't convince him." But they were moving around the floor in various delegations where labor was supporting people and surprisingly enough in farm areas, farm states like North Dakota and South Dakota and so on. The Democratic delegations were either split

or largely for Kennedy, I think, in some areas. Certainly a man like George McGovern was for Kennedy, I believe, at that time. But anyway the delegation was approached by labor people. There was a deployment of forces all around the floor before the actual nomination of Jack Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: Was there ever a serious likelihood that labor people would oppose the nomination of Johnson for the vice presidency on the floor?

HERLING: Well, there was talk of that, and I think perhaps it might easily have happened. [Joseph] Joe Rauh was so indignant, and he had enough sort of stray support. It might not have taken too much to have the kind of uproar that if not derailed it, it certainly might have delayed the nomination. They wanted to get through this area without too much blood being spilled. But I'm not sure about how serious the intention was. I think that certainly the labor people in

Minnesota couldn't have done it because they were largely for Humphrey. They couldn't have opposed Mr. Johnson, for example, because Humphrey himself was sort of -- as he told me on the floor of the Convention before the nominations were finally concluded -- ~~he said~~, "Just work in the precincts, work in the precincts" as he approached the New York delegation hoping to slither off a few delegates from Kennedy to Johnson or to Adlai Stevenson, whom it became very clear to people at the time was a stalking horse. It was transparent later on, but it was clear to some of us.

For example, I knew a delegate from New York, who told me that she was invited to a dinner out at, I think, the Ambassador in Los Angeles. Mr. [John W.] Lehman was there and Mrs. [Franklin D.] Roosevelt and, oh, about 24 to ~~26~~ twenty-six people were there. She was Eleanor Clark (?).

I forgot her married name, but she's actually a sister-in-law of Nelson Rockefeller's first wife. She's a Philadelphia girl, but And she's a liberal Democrat. She said she came into this dinner and it was quite nice. Apparently it was an evening buffet with just general talk and so on. Adlai Stevenson came in. Apparently this was going to be, she soon discovered, an effort to sort of coordinate forces for Stevenson. He saw her and she told me the next day that that night that he embraced her and he said, "Ellie, will you tell me what I'm doing here? I don't know." She was bewildered hefself because she was an admirer of Mr. Stevenson but she had the feeling he was in the clutch of forces that he didn't quite understand, which I thought was very revealing and very disturbing.

But the interesting thing is that right after the Convention was over, Bob Kennedy took no chances on having any delay in resuming relations with certain areas of labor that might have been disaffected by the Johnson thing. He called a meeting for registration on Friday morning, as I recall, of that week. He asked whether a lot of the labor people were going to play hard to get. But he asked Roy Reuther to come. Roy being at the time and still is the director of political action in the UAW. He made him the vice chairman of the Kennedy drive for voting registration because he had had considerable experience there.

You asked whether or not there was ever any real danger of their breaking away. Well, I think that at the Convention, no, but they did feel that they were going to play a little bit hard to get. Certainly they would wait in any

event, until after the Republican Convention which occurred a week or so afterwards before they made their official decision, and not in the pool halls (?). It was foregone that it was Kennedy and the Democratic ticket, but instead of meeting as they usually do in August, they postponed their meeting until after Labor Day which gave it a kind of an almost required cooling off period which the labor movement regularly has to go in for when they're frustrated, not so much because of the enmity of their opponents as the failures of their friends to produce. But I'm skipping ahead to 1966 in terms to the mood of organized labor. But there was no doubt about it. Enthusiasm was mounting very strongly. There are gaps here, which I think will be filled in when our interview with Walter Reuther develops — if, as, and when.

MORRISSEY: Let me go back to the late 1950's when Kennedy was serving on the Senate Labor Committee. A lot of people at that time interpreted his position as being anti-labor. Did he ever comment on this to you?

HERLING: No, not directly. In the first place, I thought that was an incorrect interpretation. I think it was unfair. At that time the idea of being a party to exposure of malpractice was mistakenly considered by some labor people as an effort to weaken the trade union movement. That certainly was the original position, I would think, of George Meany and most other fellows. People who were against Kennedy for president for other reasons would use his activity on the Committee, and especially Boby Kennedy's activity on the Committee, as a stick to beat him with. And actually I think this great division later on which came to pass that "John Kennedy is fine but that Bobby, he's

something else again," I think had roots in this particular area. Whereas, as general counsel of the Committee had had a job to perform, and the senators could take an aloof position, or not to be so directly involved in hand to hand combat with certain types of people brought before the Committee.

My reference earlier, Mr. Morrissey, to his dialogue, or colloquy, with Mr. Meany was an example, perhaps, of Meanys' reflection of that uncertainty on the part of some labor people with regard to Mr. Kennedy's attitude toward labor. But that certainly was not the position, for example, I'm sure of Walter Reuther and the Auto Workers because one of the great drives on the part of the McClellan Committee by the Republicans -- Barry Goldwater, and [KarleE.] Mundt and Carl [T.] Curtis -- was to undermine the Auto Workers, and mainly to undermine Walter Reuther. That was the time,

of course, that Barry Goldwater said when Hoffa was on the stand, he said, "I know you have a philosophy different from that other fella that comes from ~~p~~ Detroit [Meaning Reuther] but you know whose philosophy I want to win, don't you?" There was a kind of a grin of mutual appreciation between Mr. Hoffa and Mr. Goldwater that day. I think Mr. Goldwater probably regretted that later on, but at any rate, there was a great tactical display inside the Committee as to how the Auto Workers situation should be gone into. Finally, as I recall it, there was a compromise by which the minority was able to appoint its own counsel to carry out an investigation of the Auto Workers with particular emphasis on the Kohler Strike. That went on for about six months. Finally there were three weeks of testimony of the Auto Workers. That was when, of course, ~~Karman~~ Carmine Bellino came up with his absolute clean bill of health. He said he'd never read

the financial reports of any organization which were as clean and unexceptionable as those of the Auto Workers. So that this was a union that came off with a kind of diploma of certified public health. That was, perhaps, a reply to your question here. The important thing, I think, to remember is that the trade union movement of course is not monolithic either politically or economically. The attitddes vary from international to international. The building trades, for example, who were mad at Jack Kennedy because of their own close relationship with the Teamsters functionally and economically, many of them came around reluctantly, albeit definitely, to the support of Kennedy in that period.

MORRISSEY: When Landrum-Griffin was passed some people thought Kennedy was trying to avoid taking either the blame or credit for that legislation.

HERLING: Well, in the first place this was not the bill that he had introduced. There were two bills actually. First there was the Kennedy-Ives Bill, as you know, in the book [Power and Politics in Labor Legislation] by [Alan K.] McAdams. I imagine that would be in it. As I say, I haven't read it.

MORRISSEY: It is.

HERLING: Then later on, he drove through a bill that was fairly acceptable in the Senate, but it was in the House that the thing really became a problem. There were some smart parliamentarians that outsmarted themselves here. Then the Landrum-Griffin was a series of votes plus all kind of television programs with Eisenhower [Dwight urging the support of the Landrum-Griffin Bill and so on -- Eisenhower then being the President, of course. The Landrum-Griffing Bill had many bad features in it -- very punitive, directed toward the weakening of labor. It

was sent over to the Senate for conference. And there, I think, Kennedy eliminated certain of the bad features washed out. Although the bill as such was not the law he wanted so he did not want his name attached to it. Although there were people in the machinists union, for example, and some of the railroad people wanting to hurt Kennedy with the labor people, with the trade unions. They began calling it the Kennedy Landrum-Griffin Bill which Kennedy was very much annoyed about. It was done not so much for description purposes as for obvious reasons of political malice. Kennedy came out in September of 1959 after the law was passed and delivered a long speech, very well thought out speech, to the building trades convention in which he said, "This is a sad day -- the passing of the Landrum Griffin law is a sad day in the life of the labor movement." So there was no doubt

of how he felt on the record about this particular thing. By the way, was that McAdams' book?

MORRISSEY: Yes.

HERLING: With reference to his speech and all?

MORRISSEY: Not the reference to his speech but some discussion of this point.

HERLING: Yes, well it was a very tough speech, a very important speech.

MORRISSEY: Had you covered any of the Wisconsin primary? Or West Virginia

HERLING: No, I didn't because I was in Europe at the time. I was away. I was in Greece actually. I was consulting the Delphic oracle as to who was going to win the primary! Actually, I did, and I did a piece on that. [Laughter]

MORRISSEY: What did the oracle say?

HERLING: Well, the oracle as usual was non commital. But it was a lovely, beautiful, dewey Sunday morning. The sun was coming through the clouds, and the dew was sparkling. My wife and I came

down this pathway with our guide. Finally, there we were at the remains of the Delphic temple. I had a tape recorder with me and I said I was going to consult the Delphic oracle on this particular thing. My wife actually took a picture of me consulting the Delphic Oracle. I said, "Oh, oracle of Delphis, for whom travelers and great men of affairs often come, I come to you today to discern in some way what your feelings are about the election we in America are about to have. Will it be an eclept with that Greek sounding name, Nixon, or will be Hubert Humphrey, or will it be Jack Kennedy?" and so on this way. It was sort of the donish (?) humor, you know. Just then there was silence. I paused for reply. Then there was silence. Then I heard the twittering of birds. They seemed to form a pattern. I said, "Ah, the oracle is about to reveal the future." Then just as I felt the words and the ideas were merging, the transmission

to a mortal, a very noisy sound of bells, not tinkling bells but bells on a donkey. I said, "Well, there goes the oracle." But then I suddenly realized, "But, no," I said, "obviously she's manifesting herself in her own way." It was a donkey. It certainly was not an elephant. Therefore, it seemed to me the Democrats were going to win in 1960. ~~It was a peculiar, silly~~ That seemed kind of silly column. So that's all. If you ask a foolish question, you get a foolish answer. [Laughter]

About the Wisconsin thing, there's one thing that I do regret. I was called one night at home by Ralph Dungan. Ralph said, "We want to do a TV show on the whole Taft-Hartley, Landrum-Griffin bit, and we would like you to interview the Senator." This is for the campaign purposes and so on. It would be put out by the Kennedy campaign committee." I said, "I'd

like to think about that." I said, "You know, I'm for the Senator, but that is why, perhaps, I am hesitating." So I called back later on, and I said, "No, I'm sorry, I can't do it. I think I can write more objectively, or at least with less restraint without having been a part of the campaign apparatus and so on." I think there were some noses out of joint to. I don't know that I was ever forgiven, but I think so. But actually I had a feeling. . . . I did say, "Well, if Jack Kennedy was a reporter, what would he do?" And Ralph said, "Well, don't ask me that." I said, "Well, I think he would do the same thing I would. I'm going to be hard nosed about this as a reporter while he's hard nosed as a candidate." But there was nothing but the very best of relationships. But I must say sometimes I regretted it because there was so much

misrepresentation of his attitude on the labor field that I felt that a proper interview laid out with questions thrown at him that were hard, direct and clear might have elicited responses that would have laid it out on the line. Whether or not any other newspaper man undertook that chore, I don't know. They probably decided on another procedure anyhow.

MORRISSEY: How closely did you cover him in the campaign?

HERLING: Not too much. I traveled with him several places -- I mean just one ~~night~~ day stands. But I did travel with him through Ohio. The following week Nixon was going to travel over the identical territory, and I felt this would be a perfect table of comparison, you see. One was the second week in October, I think; the other was the third week, ~~and although~~ in a campaign that might make all the difference, but at least the communities were about the same;

The area was about the same and the political climate was roughly the same. I remember going through. I spent that time with him -- a beautiful, great campaign, great outpourings -- all the books will say -- in Ohio all the way up. The President later on recalled this -- from Cincinatti up to Columbus where I left him -- great crowds. Columbus' crowd was enormous. I did not write anything on my trip through Ohio with Senator Kennedy. I didn't want to write until I have traveled along with Nixon. The following week Nixon had less favorable weather and the crowds were almost as large. So I felt that I couldn't make [Michael V.] DiSalles predictions that the President was going to carry it by 250 - 300,000. I talked to Bob Kennedy and I told him, "I think you've got trouble in Ohio. It's a toss-up at least." And indeed it was.

I was running counter to trends, and I think even polls, at the time. And so it turned out.

MORRISSEY: What was his response to your comment?

HERLING: "Thank you very much." He was very grateful and so on. Before that, I must say, I contributed part of the speech. Everybody contributes bits and pieces. But when Mr. Kennedy was going to speak to the liberal party convention -- a big dinner in New York -- I volunteered, because they were so beset by all kinds of people running around, perhaps since I knew New York and I knew a lot of the liberal party people -- I'd like to contribute a certain phase of the speech which might otherwise be overlooked. It should be pure political -- which would to tap the nerve endings, you see, a little bit, so I did that and, I think, Bob wired the stuff right on to Ted Sorensen who was traveling with the guy. The stuff came

back and it was used which surprised me. Usually the shadow of an idea appears across the speech, but not often the substande of the words. But I guess in the campaign they were so greteful for fresh words that they picked it up.

I think a great deal of [Theodore H.] Teddy White's book [The Making of the President 1960] but I think there's a glaring omission in it. Perhaps I think as somebody with a pointed view but factually I have support. And that is, he did not emphasize the importance of labor's role in that campaign, not only because of the narrowness of the ultimate margin -- vote -- in November, but the role of: one, (as I indicated) Roy Reuther's registration energy and activity; two, their activity on the floor; three, that throughout the length and breadth of this country, they had advanced men out drumming up the crowds and so on and making sure that labor was properly represented. I

suppose there's a certain competition between certain types of political professionals and the trade union people, but it wasn't for lack of effort on the part of the Kennedys. They recognized that; they understood it; they valued it; they welcomed it. White does not make this clear at all. It's such an admirable book in many ways that that failure here is almost failure to discern the essence of certain aspects of this campaign. The entusiasm was very often trade union enthusiasm in many of these areas. I'm not looking over all the other collateral enthusiasm and the whole charisma which Kennedy began to generate as time went on, but when you consider the narrowness of the result, of course.. . . But I hate to do that. That's retroactive thinking. But at the time I felt that the importance of the labor participation was very clear. Jack understood it; Bob understood it; a few of the

people understood. Many of the people around it did not understand it. I'm not sure that Pierre Salinger understood it which, I think, is why Teddy White didn't have it, because I think Pierre helped him a great deal in certain aspects of it. And I can't imagine the Kennedys not wanting that in -- a full account of the campaign.

I was in Hyannis Port in August. I flew over from Martha's Vineyard. This was the last day of the pre-campaign, post Convention interlude. I came in. I carried with me the New York Times which Senator Kennedy hadn't yet seen. That was the day the Times carried the story about how Jack Hall (?) of the Longshoremen's union supposedly the communist control guy in Hawaii, and Nixon met under a tree. The idea was that this was going to be part of a deal with the Teamsters, you see,

to support him because they were closely allied. Senator [Hiram L.] Fong who was, of course, a man of certain attitude in his own right, presumably he was the midwife of this particular meeting. I showed this to Senator Kennedy and he said, "Well, John, I'll tell you." He said, "If he has to be elected with the help of the Teamsters then we better not be." He felt very strongly about that. Then as I left him that night, Pierre Salinger drove me back to the airport to go back to the Vineyard and he said, "The Senator said, "I hope the labor people really get going because this is their campaign almost more than anybody else's." So this was very real. Since I'm not an official of the trade union movement nor even a reliable transmission bell, I think he was speaking quite earnestly and not off the record.

MORRISSEY: Did he have anything else to say to you athat day about other elated matters?

HERLING: No, because this was part of a general press reception. Actually, I was asked to come over because it was sort of a press party before the campaign began. As I came into this thing, ~~he said,~~ "Hey, this is a pretty deluxe way to run a campaign, don't you think so?" said the Senator to me. ~~I said,~~ "Yes, it's pretty good," I said, "But nothing is too good for the working classes." And he laughed. [Laughter] I think that's it.

End of Interview