

**Leo R. Werts Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 4/29/1970**  
Administrative Information

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Werts, Leo R.; Administrative Assistant to the Secretary, Department of Labor (1961-1964); Assistant Secretary of Labor for Administration. Werts discusses the Department of Labor within the context of the Kennedy Administration, his colleagues, and the organization of programs such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Program, among other issues.

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Leo R. Werts

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Oral History Interview

with

LEO R. WERTS

April 29, 1970  
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Werts, you were just telling me that you came back from India in the first week of January, 1961. You came back here to the Department of Labor and almost immediately you were asked by the secretary-designate, Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg], to get into the business of plans for the department, and so on. Will you describe the kind of thing he was asking you to do?

WERTS: The Secretary had established a working party of Chuck Stewart [Charles D. Stewart], Bob Thomas of the Department of Labor, and Carr then of the Bureau of Budget. They, I guess, had been working for about a month or less. And, I don't know how I was selected, but anyhow, the Secretary asked me to join that group. What he had charged the group to do was to take a look at the department's programs -- program goals and objectives -- and to recommend new approaches and also to suggest any changes in organization structure that seemed to be appropriate. We did a number of papers and a lot of discussions with then Under Secretary Willard Wirtz. So, most of our work was talked out with him, and then we finally made recommendations to the Secretary. I would say that nothing very startling came out of those recommendations immediately, but they laid the groundwork for a number of things that did take place during both, well mostly in Secretary Wirtz's administration.

MOSS: What sort of groundwork?

WERTS: Well, this was the early stages of manpower

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problems which people were concerned about, which they anticipated would result from automation, from employment with the heavy, technical element because of technical, structural changes in employment. This led to a pattern of establishing administrations which would bring together.... For instance, in the area of the manpower programs, we had a Bureau of Employment Security which supervised the employment service. We had the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. We had an Office of Manpower, Automation and Training.

MOSS: Well, that came in a little later, didn't it?

WERTS: That was established by Mr. Goldberg, that's right. Then there were other parts of the department, like the Women's Bureau that had an interest in manpower and womenpower programs. What we tried to do is to look at programs and their relationships, and not be entirely guided by the existing organizational structure which obviously grew out of setting up an organization to carry out a program. But, as we saw it, there was not as much coordination and integration of programs that could come about by grouping these program bureaus under a single administrator.

MOSS: As I understand it -- now, correct me if I'm wrong -- there were a number of more or less independent bureaus reporting directly to the under secretary, in effect.

WERTS: Right. I think we had as many as twenty-one different bureaus and offices of different names, and, as I say, I think you can't relate this directly. I mean that these things were not recommended specifically, but the studies which we did at that time provided the groundwork for later actions which did establish the Manpower Administration, and then, following that, these all took place in the Secretary Wirtz administration -- Manpower, Administration, and the Labor-Management Services Administration, and then the Wage and Labor Standards Administration. This began to encompass all of the program units reporting for presidential appointees because we considered the Bureau of Labor Statistics as the fourth of these major property and program units.

MOSS: Now, at this time, when you were considering this groundwork, did you run into the objection that this was simply creating sort of a super bureau chief, a new echelon that would simply get in the way of direct relationship between the bureau chief and the secretary and the undersecretary?

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WERTS: Yes. We didn't run into this at this stage of the studies because we didn't involve too many people. But later, when implementation was attempted, there were some very bitter discussions and arguments about super-imposing, and downgrading programs and bureaus, and so forth. Particularly this was true of the Bureau of Employment Security, which was the large operation and which had the fifty states -- or whatever states there were, about fifty at that time -- and, of course, the states argued that this was downgrading the program and the bureau. I think the arguments were based on the fact that they didn't know what the change might bring in terms of their own influence, and therefore, they were against any change.

MOSS: How valid do you think some of their objections proved to be?

WERTS: I think they were right, that this might affect their influence. I can illustrate this by this experience. The Kennedy Administration had recommended the changes in unemployment insurance. It really was on the paid adjustment insurance. This was before the Mills [Wilbur S. Mills] Committee, and representatives of the state employment security agencies appeared to testify against the proposed legislation, and represented their views as the majority of the views of the states. Well, Secretary Goldberg, not easily put down, he wired each governor, asked him what his position was, and it turned out that the majority of the governors supported the legislation. So, in effect, the state employment security administrators were correct in that if you had a presidential appointee, an appointee of the policy level who was familiar with what was going on, that this would maybe make it difficult for them to retain some of their conservative ideas. And, as I guess you know, there's a -- I'm not sure of the name -- but the employer benefit association which is group-financed by a group of employers whose job it is to look after the unemployment insurance program and to be sure that the program takes into account the employer's point of view and attempts to be conservative. Many of the state employment security agency administrators are under pressure from this group, and many of them are influenced by it and their point of view.

MOSS: In the business of reorganization one of the moves that was made was to create the new assistant secretary for labor standards and to raise Esther Peterson to that level from chief of the Women's Bureau. Do you recall how this was done, where the idea originated or any of the conversations surrounding it?

WERTS: I'm not too sure, except that I think the motivation here was to recognize the status of

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women. [INTERRUPTION]

MOSS: Let me ask the question in some other ways, then. Did Esther Peterson herself actively jockey for this kind of situation? Was she pushing for it, or who was pushing for it?

WERTS: She may well have been. I'm just not informed on the.... Do you have a date as to when that took place?

MOSS: It would have taken place in the interim between 1961 and mid-1962.

WERTS: That was right before Secretary Wirtz took over.

MOSS: Right.

WERTS: I came into this spot in January of 1962, and I don't recall too many conversations about this, other than the general information that this was an attempt to improve the status of women.

MOSS: Were you assigned any particular responsibilities yourself in effecting the reorganizations?

WERTS: Well, when I went to India, I was on leave from a position of deputy assistant secretary for international affairs, when I came back, I came back to that position. The work that I was doing with the Chuck Stewart group was in addition to it. So once that project was completed, then I was not directly involved in implementation. So whatever I picked up was more corridor conversation or staff meetings or something like that.

MOSS: I see. How did you come to be selected for assistant secretary for administration?

WERTS: Well, frankly, I don't know the detail. All I know is that Secretary Goldberg called me in one day and asked me if I'd like to succeed Jimmy Dodson [James E. Dodson], who was retiring. My first reaction was, well, I'm primarily a program person and Jimmy Dodson has had a rather limited job as budget officer and so forth. I wasn't sure that this would appeal to me or that I would do an effective job at it. Well, the secretary said that he wanted me to think it over and he had ideas of expanding it, and he would pretty much give me a lot of rope and I could make the job what I wanted to make it. So, after some consideration I did accept it. But what influences went... There were no rumors as far as I knew. Nobody had told me that this was going to happen. So, it came completely out of the blue when

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Secretary Goldberg invited me in to talk about it. So, what went beyond that, I...

MOSS: Did you have any other reservations about the job?

WERTS: No, it was mostly -- as I viewed what Mr. Dodson was doing -- it was pretty limited. I didn't look upon myself as particularly effective in the mechanics of budget. Now I think as it's turned out, some of the wider dimensions of program budgeting make it a very attractive and effective and an influential spot.

MOSS: What are some of these things?

WERTS: Well, we had begun, even before President Johnson introduced PPBS [Program-Planning-Budgeting-System], to try to develop a system of planning and programming and management as we call it, the program budget management system. And, essentially what this called for was.... This is where both Secretary Goldberg and Secretary Wirtz had a lot of input. The planning process, as we identified it, was to reassess the social and economic needs because they were of the impression, and had good basis for it, I think, saying that we were continuing to solve the problems of the thirties instead of updating our programs to solve the problems of the sixties. This was particularly true in some of the old employment service manpower programs.

I don't know that our process particularly influenced the development of the manpower development training act or changes in some of the standards programs, but I think the process did lead people to think, so that the first step was to update problems and to develop programs that would be responsive to solving those problems, then translating that into a budget.

Then, our concept of the management aspect was to develop the organization to match the kind of a program you had to administer. This I think, did result and had some connection with the earlier studies of setting up administrations where related programs that serve a major common goal could be under one administration.

MOSS: Well, in looking over the material, I see three major new organizational structures. One is in response to the labor-management disclosure act. Another one is in response to the labor-management disclosure act. Another one is in response to the welfare and pension plans act. And the third one is the Office of Manpower, Automation and Training. Only the last of those, it seems to me, fits this thing that you've been describing. The first two are in responses to.... I mean, you had to administer these programs that

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were put on you by the Congress, in effect.

WERTS: That's right, except that when i came in in 1961, you had a separate office administering the welfare pension disclosure act. You had another separate

office administering the Landrum-Griffin [bill]. And, then there was a new piece of legislation, and the new piece of legislation strengthened the welfare pension.

MOSS: Right. Gave the secretary investigative and subpoena powers and this kind of thing.

WERTS: And, so, it was at this juncture that we designated the Labor-Management Services Administration. In other words, instead of organizing around each piece of legislation's program, we tried to bring them together under a single manager and a presidential appointee.

MOSS: This is more a development from this committee that was formed in earlier....

WERTS: Yes. As I say, I'm not sure that it was designed exactly that way, but certainly, the embryonic ideas were started, the concept of relating programs and the organizational structure. I guess the Labor Management Services Administration -- we had begun to develop this when Secretary Goldberg was here. I think it was probably completed in Secretary Wirtz's regime. The Wage and Labor Standards was developed in the Wirtz administration.

MOSS: I think that answers the question, more or less. Let me shift to a slightly different subject and ask you how you would characterize the impact of the new administration, both that of the President and that of the new secretary, on the career personnel and the policies of the Labor Department?

WERTS: Well, some general points. I think many people in the Department of Labor who were, I think, very pro-Kennedy, pro-labor, and at least to a large degree, I think were more interested in an activist role in the labor programs than the more moderate, inactive, passive role that had been played under the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration. So, when I came back, I found a real enthusiasm for doing things and making things move. Of course, as your record may show, I think one of the very first acts taken by President Kennedy was to expand the employment service and send up a special budget to deal with improved employment services in the urban areas, the major fifty-five metropolitan areas. So, I think in general, you had a motivation, a stimulation to be more activist.

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Then I think this created a climate for some of the things that we were then developing of new systems to take a look at the problems and then the new programs.... It would be difficult if you were in an environment where nobody wanted to change anything or rock the boat, keep things going. Without an activist climate most of these things just wouldn't have been feasible, probably would have been rejected. Well, those are the things that come to me.

MOSS: What sorts of things did Secretary Goldberg do when he came on to encourage this activism?

WERTS: Well, for instance, the fact that he set up this group to take a look at how we were doing things and how the programs were and how we might change them, and I think this pervaded.... I was not active in his personal staff meetings, but the reflections I would get would indicate, get new ideas, new approaches, that this was the order of the day. You know, even without communication through the secretary, you had this same atmosphere in the President's statements, in his general approach to developments. And then, of course, Goldberg brought in some overy activist types, like Ester Peterson, Jim Reynolds [James J. Reynolds], and I'm trying to think of the other....

MOSS: Jerry Holleman?

WERTS: Holleman, yes, and Bill Wirtz and George Weaver. Particularly, Secretary Wirtz was, you know, more of a political animal than some people, I think, estimated him to be, and therefore, he was responsive to the President and Goldberg in terms of new ideas, trying to change things, to get them moving in a different direction. So, I assume that he was implementing, for Secretary Goldberg, some of these new approaches. It's hard to put your finger on specifics. There are so many things that happen in between that you're never sure which specific relates to which period.

MOSS: Yes. This is why some of our colleagues insist that we ought to do this sort of thing very early in the game.

WERTS: Yes. Well, that's the reason I thought the records that Moynihan [Daniel P. Moynihan] made would be much more alive in terms of the times.

MOSS: Well, let me ask about Secretary Goldberg and his operating style. Would you call it loose or structured? Did he have regular meetings? This kind of thing. How did people approach him? How did they get to him? How did he communicate with people?

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WERTS: I think he was very accessible. I would characterize his approach as probably unstructured, highly mobile, moving fast to deal with problems. I guess, going back to you earlier question about how I got selected, I had been in international business, and George Weaver and George Lodge, who were there, they were out in the country quite a bit; therefore, on the international things, I had to deal with the secretary pretty regularly, and scheduled a few trips for him. Obviously, it's a give-and-take kind of situation. So, we developed a very good personal relationship. Confidence developed, I suppose it was partly based on likes and dislikes and, I suppose, to some extent, on the fact that you deliver what you're supposed to deliver. But, he was active and knew what was

going on, and would call you, and he'd call you in. I don't recall too many meetings where many people were present. But, you had a lot of direct relationships on things that he was interested in.

MOSS: On the international scene, as a digression, what do you recall the situation with the diplomatic implications of the United States labor unions giving assistance to developing labor unions in Africa and so on?

WERTS: Well, I knew that the AFL-CIO had financed -- I guess they do not do it now -- through the ICFTU, which is the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, they financed a trade union training center in Kampala [Uganda] whichever country that's in, I don't recall. They had an AFL-CIO representative for Africa, who I think has since located in New York, whereas he used to be traveling a good bit. Well, there's not an awful lot. I don't know what particular aspect of this you'd be....

MOSS: Well, what I ran across was the fear on the part of the State Department and on the part of some of the African countries that this was a form of U.S. economic imperialism kind of thing, and that they wanted to be very sure that there wasn't an official U.S. government stamp on this help, that it was strictly union to union, rather than government policy.

WERTS: Yes. Well, I was not too much involved in that, although I can see where the problem might be, that Secretary Goldberg was very active and he had more background in international problems and programs than most people recognized. So, I, in coming from the labor movement, having their confidence, I can see where he might have endorsed things without checking very much with the State Department. He might have had a direct communication with the

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President and had some encouragement or thought he had encouragement.

MOSS: Was there ever any feeling in the department that Secretary Goldberg was very busy about things, such as labor disputes and general economic policy and, therefore, somewhat removed or alienated from the normal workings of the department?

WERTS: Well, I guess there was a touch of that. Of course, everybody wanted to have a direct, personal relationship with him. And obviously his time on disputes did make him less available. And, of course, after a time, he began to involve Secretary Wirtz. So that I think there was a period when both of them were active in labor dispute problems and therefore, there was really no one to make the day-to-day decisions which....

MOSS: As I understand it, a good deal of this fell back on Millard Cass, did it not?

WERTZ: At least the questions came there. I wouldn't be able to say how much he made decisions. I would assume that he might accumulate these and then get answers as he had access to either Secretary Wirtz or Secretary Goldberg. But, I suppose, inevitably, most of us who were in a special relationship to the secretary can give people opinions as to what might be the right way to act on a problem and people would act in that direction and if nothing happened to upset it, that would be it.

MOSS: Yes. Unless otherwise directed.

WERTZ: Yes. So, in terms of decisions, I'd have some question about it, but in terms of influence, no question.

MOSS: Yes. Now when Secretary Goldberg went on to the Supreme Court and William Wirtz became the secretary, what was the feeling in the department on this move?

WERTS: It seemed to me it was almost a change without any noticeable reaction. I think, as Secretary Goldberg told me in the early days, and when he was talking about when he was going to the court, and so forth, he indicated that at first he and Bill Wirtz, you know, they weren't responding to each other; but, after a while he got to know him better and Wirtz got to know him.

MOSS: In what ways weren't they responding to each other?

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WERTS: Well, I don't know. He, in relating it to me.... I guess he was more active, more to characterize, shooting from the hip, whereas Bill Wirtz was more analytical, maybe before he would make decisions. He'd want to analyze the study. He wasn't so active as Secretary Goldberg was, obviously, just from the record. I think when he involved Secretary Wirtz in some of the serious labor dispute problems, he recognized the value of this analytical, more studious.... Anyhow, one of the stories he told me was that he had, when the President asked him to take the Supreme Court, the President asked who should succeed him, and he told me he immediately recommend Bill Wirtz. Apparently, the President either didn't know Bill Wirtz too well, or may have had some reservations. Secretary Goldberg put it on the basis of, well, the President said, "I don't know him." I wondered whether this was partly the hole out of the Adlai Stevenson group. Bill Wirtz, of course, was identified there. Anyhow, as Secretary Goldberg finally said, well, the President, after he had seen him a couple of times on this, he said, "Well, if I can't trust you to recommend the Secretary of Labor, then I can't trust you on the court. So, if you recommend him, I take him." Well, that's Goldberg's story. [Laughter]

MOSS: How about the jockeying for the now vacant under secretary position. There were several names mentioned, Reynolds being one, and Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] and Meany [George Meany], I think each were backing different men at the time for this undersecretaryship. Do you recall any of this?

WERTS: Yes.

MOSS: And Henning [John F. Henning], of course, wound up with it.

WERTS: Yes. Jerry Holleman, I think, I never can get his name, left him the labor recruiting. Henning had been selected, really, I guess it hadn't been announced, but had been selected as replacing Holleman, and as you say, the labor movement, I guess others had candidates. And, since that could not be resolved to anyone's satisfaction, and since Henning had already been approved by the labor movement, the decision was to move him into that spot, as Secretary Wirtz related it to me, thereby avoiding these other conflicts. I just don't know how significant a candidate Jim Reynolds was for that spot at that time. I think if Secretary Goldberg had had any influence, which I'm sure he did have, I doubt that Jim Reynolds would have been the candidate.

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MOSS: Why?

WERTS: Well, I don't know. Jim Reynolds has told me that, for some reason or another, he didn't think Goldberg particularly had full confidence in him. Now, that's just Jim Reynold's own statement. This was after the fact, of course. Beyond that I don't know.

MOSS: Okay. Now, you mentioned Holleman. Do you recall the circumstances of his resignation?

WERTS: Yes.

MOSS: Anything you want to say on that?

WERTS: No, other than that, interestingly enough, I threw away, just within the sixty day period the voluminous record that had been accumulated on that case.

MOSS: Well, that hurts a historian. Oh, that really hurts.

WERTS: And, I did this sort of deliberately, saying, "Well, why have this floating around when I have no place to send it, no place to...." It had been sent to me by a chap who had resigned. He had, apparently.... Well, Bill Wirtz had been involved and Moynihan had been involved in developing the background on this. So, it was

Moynihan's record, I guess, that this chap was holding, and then, when he left, he sent it to me saying, "well this is your business."

MOSS: You don't recall whether it was ever microfilmed for departmental history or anything of that sort?

WERTS: I'm sure it wasn't. No, this would never have gotten into the mainstream.

MOSS: Because one of the things I was going to ask you was, if you had anything of that sort, the Kennedy Library would love to have it.

WERTS: I'm sorry we didn't get together sooner.

MOSS: Anyhow, there was a very thorough investigation made?

WERTS: Yes, because I know the secretary.... The fact is I was involved in this because I was on this job at that time, and this involved, you know, personal security, and so forth and so on. So I was brought

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in by Secretary Wirtz at that point to pull together some records and information about travel and so forth and so on, and I know that I had sat in several sessions with some of the legal people and others to work. Bill Wirtz was very meticulous in setting down the record. So, he would carry a cause for the Supreme Court. So, I think that any decision was based on all the facts and on a very careful analysis. When I saw this records, some six or eight weeks ago, I glanced at some of the other stuff, recognized some of it. But I don't think there was anything in there was not made public, really.

MOSS: There was nothing in it that was not made public?

WERTS: No, nothing very significant.

MOSS: Okay, because this is one of the things now, that we have a record that is completely lost and anything that you could remember from it, that you think is not a part of the public record, we ought to get on tape. Because, as I indicated in my letter, you can put whatever restrictions you want in this.

WERTS: Yes. As I recall, whatever I looked at in this recent record and in the earlier discussions, you know, the public record is pretty much what was in the record. I think there may have been more knowledge on the part of Secretary Goldberg of this relationship than his action might have indicated. But, it seemed to me that I saw nothing in there that was more than the contribution that this gentleman had made to Holleman's living expenses or something. And, I don't think there was any indication except

a lot more of a record of efforts on the part of people to influence Holleman on decisions on importation of Mexicans and things like that. But, I guess the thing that sticks with me is that the impression was, well, the thing is pretty clean, in terms of Holleman's actions.

MOSS: It sounded worse than it was?

WERTS: Yes, you know, everybody was throwing political stuff around, and, I think, as I also think of the record and discussions, the problem was to make the facts which were fairly simple and fairly clean, to make them believable. This was always a problem. People just don't believe, you know, if you tell them that, well, this one offer of a thousand bucks or something, and that's all it was. Well, they just don't believe it. So, you've got to go through, and this is where Goldberg, of course, was past master, at making the thing not only right, but they had to be seen right. And, as an earlier colleague of mine years ago said, "Well, it's not only got to be right, but people have

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got to believe it's right." So, I think this was, as I looked at the record, a lot of the gyrations were to make the public impression that it was really right, and that the record that was put on the record was the right record. That's the impression I have of that situation.

MOSS: Okay, fine. Thank you for that. Let me move to another area, and that's the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program within the department. What sort of things were you doing and what sort of things did both secretaries insist upon in the way of implementing the hiring, promotion, training, and so on, of minority group people, both here in the department and in the regional offices?

WERTS: Well, of course, first, they had demonstrated their policy and their attitude by bringing in George Weaver and others, I think almost from the beginning of the record.... You know numbers are not necessarily a good measure. They had one of the better records in the government. I don't recall, other than the usual presidential announcements and Secretary Goldberg's announcements.... The only special thing that I got involved in early, and this goes to labor management relations and the executive order and its impact and the period previous to its signing: the AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees] Local 12 had been dealing with Secretary Goldberg on a problem in the D.C. United States Employment Service Center.

MOSS: Now, the union you mention, the American Federation of Government Employees....

WERTS: Right. Local 12. Right. They were accusing.... Apparently they were stating that in the last two or three years -- this was 1960, 1962 -- that the minority employment in the employment service in the D.C. center had declined. Dave North was a special assistant secretary. I forget who was the Negro involved and Ed McVeigh

[Edward J. McVeigh], the director of personnel, Secretary Goldberg had appointed them to make an analysis of the situation, and they brought back a report which disproved the allegations made by the union. Then the Secretary made an announcement and made some reference to the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], apparently not knowing that the report had not been checked with them. Anyhow, about at this stage, I guess I had been on the job about a month or two, and all hell broke loose. So, the secretary called me in to take a look at it to see what I could do about it. Well, it turns out that the people who made the report took a different period than the union was talking about. It included an extra six months, or something

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like that, which indicated an improvement. This, of course, was under the Goldberg period.

Anyhow, the union got very upset about the fact that the boy seemed to have manipulated the record to accomplish the.... I remember spending hours and hours and hours arguing with the union as to what we were going to do about this. They wanted a public apology and so forth and so on. Finally, I said, "Well, you want a public apology or are you really interested in doing something about equal employment opportunity? Now, you say that people haven't been promoted, that we don't have the right mix. I'm willing to see that something happens on this point, because I've talked to the secretary and he's all for it. But, you gain nothing by asking the secretary to make a public apology, of having jiggered the record." I said, "I don't think he knew the circumstances anyhow. Somebody else made a report and he trusted them, and there you are." So, anyhow, it was in this connection that I learned of the secretary's commitment to doing something about this. Otherwise the pressure seemed to me about standard.

MOSS: Do you have any particular problem areas where people were really dragging their feet on this?

WERTS: Well, yes. I think on equal employment opportunity and on employment management relations where we negotiated agreements which then placed restrictions on certain actions that management could take, or we'd get a complaint from the union and we'd do something about it. Well, this was a traumatic experience for managers. You'd think, maybe, in the Department of Labor they might be pro-labor. Well, they were pro-Sixteenth Street, in general, the theory of organized labor, and so forth, from whom they got the support for some of their programs; but employees, you know, to tell me what I can do and can't do, boy this was really tough. Likewise, on the equal employment opportunity, I remember sitting in on a meeting with George Weaver, of which I guess I was chairman, on equal opportunity, and getting the usual, "Well, you know, you can't use the Negroes in certain kinds of positions. You can't find qualified Negroes. You can't set any targets or goals for employment." And, so we....

MOSS: These were the objections that were being raised by the Bureau chiefs?

WERTS: Yes, Bureau chiefs. So, at some point -- this may have come at the end of the Goldberg regime or the early part of the Wirtz regime -- since we had this kind of negative effort, it was decided in the Secretary's office to require all appointments, fourteen and above, to come to the under secretary for clearance and with evidence

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that every possible search had been made to get minority group employment. So, I think this must have come at the end of the Goldberg, and was carried through until the end of the Wirtz, regime. So it was through these devices, you know, where you had to get approval -- And sometimes they'd be sent back saying, "Well, we don't think you looked hard enough" -- that people began to realize that the secretary meant business.

MOSS: What about the regional offices, particularly the employment service in, say the southern states or in the midwestern states?

WERTS: Yes. Well, I think our record is not as good and has not been as good, again the -- I think this came after Goldberg left, but in the Kennedy Administration -- secretary authorized freezing of job vacancies, and we'd say, "Okay, here's a job you can't fill unless you fill it with a Negro or a Spanish-American." Through this device, we did get clerical people and some wage and hour inspectors, and that sort of thing, in the field.

MOSS: Do you know if the device was passed on to other government agencies as a useful tool?

WERTS: I'm sure that it was included in our reports to the Civil Service Commission, formal reports as well as informal reports. I assume, although I don't know for a fact, that this is practiced in some agencies. We still do do this on occasion, where we find an all-white situation and people say, "Well, we just can't find anybody." So, we say, "Okay, we're going to fill that job. You can't do anything about it unless you come up with a Negro or a black man or a Spanish American." Then we go out and we find it and then practically say, "Here's the man you hire, or a woman." I think the climate in the Kennedy-Johnson Administration changed from this early situation that I described to almost discrimination in reverse. I know in the early programs when Stan Ruttenberg [Stanley Ruttenberg] took over the Manpower Administration and set up a new bureau of work-training, they just went out of their way and hired black men and women. And, I think that bureau, its executives, I think were about fifty-five. Then we also, through his efforts, hired a number of Spanish speaking in Dallas and San Francisco. I don't know what the exact years of that.... But, in any event, the key point is that the atmosphere did change over the four, eight, twelve, years, whereas today, you don't get that kind of resistance. At least people, if they have it in the back of their minds, they don't speak it.

MOSS: Do you recall who from the department was actively working on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? Steve Shulman [Stephen N. Shulman],

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I know, was involved in it.

WERTS: Yes, I think from the Secretary's office, Steve would be involved. But, I think, really, the person who individually did as much as any one person, in the years I've known, is Ed McVeigh, who is the director of personnel. Obviously, I guess one you could describe as partly a single-track reaction: he knew this is what the secretary wanted, and therefore he went out to do it, and he didn't brook any interference. But he, as against people who could drag their feet or go through all the motions and not be effective, was active and I think it brought results.

MOSS: What about Chapin [Arthur A. Chapin]?

WERTS: Well, Art is.... His heart's in the right place but not a very effective guy. I think when he came into the department he'd relatively little experience in administration, so he was a little erratic. There was obviously no question about his commitment, but I don't think he was very effective in follow-through, or meeting situations that had to be met in order to get people to use minority group people. I think other people who.... After all you say, people still had to be eligible on the civil service lists or whatnot. Art's approach was to find somebody he thought he ought to be hired and then go around and tell people you ought to hire him. Then, he'd find out that they didn't have civil service status and so on; and then would complain, well, "These guys are negative." Whereas McVeigh, who knew the regulations, he fixed it so that when he laid a guy on the doorstep, they had no objections to make, or they had no way of denying it because here it is, it's all clear. All you have to do is to put him to work.

MOSS: Now, did McVeigh do this because he was thoroughly familiar with civil service regulations and knew how to manipulate them, or did he get them changed to suit his purposes?

WERTS: Oh, I think a little of both. He might have even violated a couple in order to accomplish the objective. In other words, as we've said, you know, you give a preference to women, you give preference to physically handicapped, you give preference to veterans, you give preference to trade union people, you write specifications in the apprenticeship programs that practically say that unless you've had experiences as an apprenticeship director in a union, you can't be on the staff. So, we'd operate on the basis that, okay, if you want black people, you make the regulations fit black people. People who were against it could always say, "Well, these people don't qualify

and look at the regulations.” But you could hire a lot of people who didn’t fit the regulations either. So, you can twist it either way. I think that a lot of things are within the regulations. So people can argue either way, depending on their bias.

MOSS: Who did the legwork from the department on the employee-management relations task force?

WERTS: Well, I think Pat Moynihan was heavily involved. I don’t know who worked directly with him, but in my discussion with him during that period, he personally was looking at it, analyzing it, and thinking it through and working it out with Secretary Goldberg and Secretary....

MOSS: Why was his position of policy planning created? What lead to that?

WERTS: Well, the conversation would go something like this. He was special assistant secretary as you know. Secretary Wirtz said to me one day, he said, “Well, Pat Moynihan is one of the brightest guys we’ve got around in the government, and i think we ought to make him assistant secretary.” I didn’t bite on that because I saw he hardly knew what was going to happen. Anyhow, he said, “I don’t think he would probably want to administer a big program, so we ought to put together a job in this area of planning or research and the supervision of the BLS [Bureau of Labor Standards], since that was a related activity. Then when Pat left, he was not replaced. I think we took that position and made the job for Esther Peterson.

MOSS: Well, no. Esther Peterson’s job came before that. She became assistant secretary for labor secretary for labor standards, including the Bureau of Labor Standards, and so on, and the Women’s Bureau, and employee’s compensation, all under her.

WERTS: Yes, but I think.... We got a new assistant-secretaryship for her. That’s right. I was trying to remember what happened to the job that Pat had.

MOSS: Yes, because that was a newly created one as well.

WERTS: Reynolds came in as labor-management relations and Holleman was manpower employment, and...

MOSS: Lodge, then WEaver for international, a new post was created for her. Then, as I get it, a fifth new assistant secretary for policy research and

planning, or policy planning and research.

WERTS: Well, we had four, if you include mine.

MOSS: I'm sorry I left yours out. Right. you had four. You created one for Esther Peterson, and then a new one for Moynihan.

WERTS: Well, that doesn't add up, because we've only got four besides myself.

MOSS: Alright. Let me go back to my organization chart here. In 1963, '64, the solicitor, the assistant secretary for labor standards, manpower administrator, assistant secretary for labor management-relations, administrative assistant secretary -- that's six so far, including the solicitor -- and assistant secretary for policy planning and research. So you have six plus solicitor in the [Government] Organization Manual for '63-'64.

WERTS: There's something wrong. [Interruption] So there are four other than the solicitor and myself.

MOSS: Right.

WERTS: That's correct. I think what happened is, when Pat left we put the assistant secretary and manpower administration, so that the policy planning then came to be the assistant secretary for manpower.

MOSS: I see, I see. Okay, but this was either very late in the Kennedy Administration or in the Johnson Administration.

WERTS: I think it probably happened in the early part of.... It's on the edge because I remember, shortly after Secretary Wirtz took over, he talked to me about getting Stan Ruttenberg to come in as his economic advisor, and that, of course, was in the Kennedy period. I think Ruttenberg may have been the manpower administrator before he became assistant secretary and the ceremonies were in the White House with President Johnson.

MOSS: Did you have any personal contact with President Kennedy beyond that?

WERTS: Well, a couple, sort of as fill-in. On a couple of occasions, President Kennedy was entertaining some foreign dignitary and the secretary was busy and the under secretary was busy, and so I was sent, and so I had a chance to.... I remember only one occasion having a

two or three minute conversation. I forget who we were entertaining that day. But, we walked out on the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance there, and I think it was Congressman Rooney [John J. Rooney] and the President, and maybe one other. It was just after one of the President's speeches -- I can't recall the subject -- but, anyhow, we were chatting there. I said to the President, "Well, I think it's going to be a long time before anybody does a better speech than that one." He was very generous, he said, "Well, I appreciate that and hope that you're right." That sort of thing. But, there's just that passing....

MOSS: Yes. Any comment, in closing, that you'd like to make?

WERTS: Well, I did have one other answer of the President, which I think typifies him. He was going to see some foreign labor leader, and somebody from the State Department and myself went over to brief him in his office. The State Department chap, who was senior, I guess, was trying to tell him what it was all about. He said, "Well, have you got a piece of paper?" No, he didn't have a piece of paper. So I had beforehand written out the points, and I said, "Well, here's a piece." So, he took it and read it and that solved his problem. So it just showed how he could absorb information. I really hadn't thought about it until now, but it did indicate how I was impressed with the way he could take a look at a piece of paper and recite back to you what he'd read.

MOSS: Is there anything you can say in closing that would be of a comparative nature among the different secretaries in the different administrations that you served either from the point of view of how it was to work for the department, or the policies and so on? You touched on some of his but is there some sort of summary statement you'd like to make?

WERTS: Well, here's the sort of characterization I make. The first secretary I worked for was Secretary Tobin [Maurice J. Tobin]. I suspect that there was no secretary I was personally more involved with than Secretary Tobin. I had just come out of Germany after five years in the military government, and he wanted to take a trip to Geneva, so I was selected to sort of guide the tour. I did that three times. So, I got to know him very well, very intimately. As I viewed it, from an administrative point of view -- well, I guess from a political point of view, either.... Put it this way. I think it was with Secretary Mitchell [James P. Mitchell], since then we've had a series of effective secretaries of labor. Discount my friend Durkin [Martin P. Durkin], because he wasn't here long enough. But,

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with Mitchell and Goldberg and Wirtz -- and I would have to extend that now to Schultz [George P. Schultz] -- you have people who, you now, know what the world's about. They know the problems, they know the political processes, they know the bureaucratic processes, and, one way or another, they know how to get things done.

I think, in contrast, Mitchell had a very difficult time, because, well, he didn't have that status or stature that maybe the millionaires had. But in his own quiet, shrewd way, he got President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], and he got some things done.

[Well, Goldberg, of course, an activist, and I don't know whether this is true or not but they tell me that -- well, I know this to be a fact -- Secretary Goldberg would just walk in on the President unannounced and without appointment. He'd bring some dignitary that he wanted to meet the President and he'd just walk in. According to the story, after a while somebody, maybe the President, said to Secretary Goldberg, "Don't do this anymore. I'd like to know who was coming to see me," and so forth and so on. Anyhow, that typifies that he was an activist. He cut through the red tape, went to people, and he had the capacity to influence.]

Then, in contrast, Secretary Wirtz, as I indicated earlier, a little more analytical. I guess maybe that's not the way to describe it. Active extroverts, I suspect, do some analysis, too, but they do it differently. Anyhow, Secretary Wirtz was a little more cautious. Of course, he had great swings of relationships with the White House and the President. But, I think, as far as I could see, he had a terrific relationship with President Kennedy. I don't know whether you ever ran across a tape which he made, I think it was within a matter of a couple of days or less after the assassination. The secretary had his top staff together and we prevailed upon him to make a tape of it so we could send it to the field offices. So, he did make a tape -- he must have that, if it has any interest -- what his reaction now that he's dead.

Anyhow, I think up through that period things were going well and he was very happy. I think in the Johnson Administration it was up and down, pretty tough. I remember being -- it's not related to this, but -- in a meeting of the cabinet with Secretary Wirtz, and after the meeting we went out together. Then Bill Wirtz often said, "Mr. President, here's the Werts that really often said, 'Mr. President, here's the Werts that really loves the Department of Labor.'" And the President turned to me and he said, "I've heard about you. But don't kid yourself. I know that the guy there who works for me is tops." So, there were times when nothing could be better. Then there were moments when it was just touch and go.

Anyhow, to generalize, I think we have top-notch secretaries, beginning with Mitchell, in my experience. They have brought the department from being uninfluential, or a

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non-entity, to being a factor in what's going on in the world.

MOSS:           Okay, fine. I didn't want to break your train of thought earlier there, but this tape you mentioned that Wirtz did right after the assassination, do you have a copy here in the department?

WERTS:           Yes, I'm sure we have.

MOSS:           Could you get a copy run off and....

WERTS:           Well, if we've got one, we've got several, so we can probably just give you

one.

MOSS: Okay. Splendid, splendid. That would be fine. Have you anything else you want to put down for posterity.

WERTS: I think we've covered it. The less you think about it, the less people ask you questions.

MOSS: Well, I was going to say that if I run across something in the future, can I come back?

WERTS: Yes, by all means.

MOSS: Fine. Splendid.

WERTS: Any way that we can help.

MOSS: Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Werts.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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