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Edelman, legislative assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy (1964-1968), discusses Theodore H. White's 1968 book *The Making of the President*, developing Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign speeches, and Lyndon B. Johnson's withdrawal from the 1968 presidential race, among other issues.

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Peter B. Edelman—RFK #2

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Second of Eight Oral History Interviews

with

Peter B. Edelman

July 29, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Larry Hackman

HACKMAN: Okay, do you have anything from last time that just occurs to you that...

EDELMAN: Yeah, a couple things. I've been looking at Theodore White's [Theodore H. White] book this year and I think that while I remember I would set straight, at least from my point of view a couple of things. One is that he conveys the impression that Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] vacillated on the decision to run up until the very last minute, that is literally up until the night before he made the announcement. And whereas, of course, he did vacillate, in my view far too long, I want to reiterate again my view that he had decided to a certainty that he was going to run, to my personal

knowledge at least two days before the New Hampshire primary, and to my knowledge as told to me by others as much as a week before the New Hampshire primary. And the things which White mentions are important in terms of just understanding who White was talking to because undoubtedly there were some who, although close to Robert Kennedy, came to the discussions carrying a freight of their own and in advising him either now to run or to hold back, if such and such would happen, which would have been their fall back position, are not telling others that, in fact, he was agreeing with them to hold back unless or if such and such should happen. So that we get the statement by Theodore White that some of the advisors were saying, "Why don't you endorse McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] for the time being and

because the primaries would be very bad for you and you wouldn't be able to win in the primaries and it would be a bruising battle and if you endorse, McCarthy, you can ride that and win at the Convention." Well, I know that temperamentally Robert Kennedy was never about to endorse

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Eugene McCarthy, and yet White kind of has him wavering in the book and has him wavering really up until the last minute and presents a very dramatic scene where he appears at the outdoor window at his house, having walked around for a while in the early morning hours, saying, "I couldn't come out for McCarthy. I'll have to run myself." Well, undoubtedly that happened, but he.... The imputation is incorrect, that is to say that there was a real doubt as of that time, which I think is said to be early morning on the day that we announced his running. And, you know, that just doesn't make any sense.

Okay. Another point that's said is that he agreed or had some interest in possibly not running if the Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] proposal on the Vietnamese Commission were to be accepted by Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. Now, on this I have less proof. My statement on the McCarthy business is based on really intimately knowing Robert Kennedy and his attitudes about McCarthy, but even on this I'd be quite sure that Kennedy let

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Sorensen play the thing out, but again really secure in his own mind that he knew his man in knowing Lyndon Johnson and that Lyndon Johnson would never accept it. And I.... These are all ifs, but if that Commission had come through, I personally would again think that that wouldn't have deterred him from running. So that I think this is really going to come to be a point of historical dispute as to when he actually decided to run or what, perhaps having decided to run, what last minute doubts did he have or what possible pullbacks did he have. And naturally everybody in a position like that has doubts. You buy a house and the minute the guy accepts your offer, you say, "My God, I shouldn't have bought that house." So undoubtedly doubts went through his mind, but I would just say as strongly as I can for the record that I'm certain that once he made the decision, before the New Hampshire primary, that whatever winds of doubt went through his mind were of that kind of second thought, "Gee maybe" kind of thing, rather than

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very serious entertaining of the possibility of going on another course.

The other point that I want to clarify is that White describes, and this is obviously a personal matter, White describes those who urged Kennedy to run in 1967 as self seekers. Well, I'll say for myself and I really will, say for everybody—I think I can say with confidence for everybody that was urging him to run—that self seeking would have been the last motive. White is apparently implying that those of us who were young and perhaps ambitious were trying to promote a career for ourselves in the White House. Well, I would

just, you know, like to have a conversation with Mr. White about that because we were concerned about what was going on in the country. We were concerned about a war that was killing two, three, four hundred Americans a week. We were concerned about a lack of action about domestic problems that were causing cities to go up in flames. And Robert Kennedy was concerned, as much concerned as we were, about the

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same things. And indeed when one talks about his intellectual development and his political development and our relationship to that, it was that in a sense Adam Walinsky and I were central, certainly not by no means only, but central among those that he would speak to about these things, central among those that he would bounce ideas off of about these things. He certainly would glean information from many sources, as I said about Vietnam I think last time, from McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] while he was still in the Pentagon and others. But the.... It was because we shared all of these concerns that Adam and I and others wanted him to run. It was concern for the country and I, you know, I really.... There's a lot of people and they have a lot of things to say, but I guess that's one thing that I resent is being called a self seeker.

HACKMAN: Did you ever talk to Teddy White? Did he ever talk to you when he was writing the book or during this whole period?

EDELMAN: No. No. I mean that's another point about him is

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that he has, I think, outlived his usefulness. I think he's.... The times have simply passed him by.

HACKMAN: Some of the reviewers are finally saying that, I think.

EDELMAN: Yeah. And, you know, I enjoyed his 1960 book and I learned a lot from it. Perhaps if I'd known more about that campaign, I would have learned less, but I did enjoy it. And the '64 book was pretty good too, although the year was a bit of a bore. But now in 1968 he goes back and talks to the same old people. I have nothing against them, you know. Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] is his friend and Arthur Schlesinger is a very, perceptive, acute kind of individual, but that's his friend and the New York crowd generally. And I think that if he did want to know what was going on in 1968 he ought to have talked to some of those who were the major actors in it. As Jack Newfield points out in his review, he doesn't mention Julian Bond's [Horace Julian Bond] name once or Harold Hughes [Harold E. Hughes] once and they were key figures. And I suspect if you went on through

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it, although I haven't, you probably would find that some of the key McCarthy people like Sam Brown [Samuel W. Brown, Jr.] and Dave Mixner [David Mixner] aren't discussed at all. He probably.... Well, I know you find that.... Well, I won't make reference to the Kennedy campaign. But just in general he treats.... There's an almost racist overtone to his treatment of the blacks. He calls Orangeburg, South Carolina an incident of black violence, but you couldn't have been further from the case. As Newfield again points out, that's like saying that Hiroshima was Oriental violence. He says that in Chicago one reason the local black citizens didn't join in the protest is because there was no real sense of injustice against blacks which is just.... You know, it's an irrational, crazy statement. And all the way through you get the sense that he feels that the black cause is not just and really that these are some trouble makers and people who are, you know, sort of never going to be satisfied. And then his treatment of the students

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is very, very similar. You know, just a kind of a bunch of spoiled, dissatisfied, arrogant punks and the sense of the manipulation that was going on and, you know, the sense that what went on in Lincoln Park was somehow started by the kids rather than the police. And since these were major events during the year and since every one of them reflects a legitimate and important and perhaps overridingly important attitude toward the major issues of the year, I have to question whether White is really qualified to be writing about politics in 1968.

HACKMAN: What about the other books on Robert Kennedy? While we're on this, what about Witcover? Whom do you think he talked to, if anyone, that much within the...

EDELMAN: Well, Witcover's [Jules Joseph Witcover] book was written basically off of the clippings. I mean, it was basically a pastiche of just the daily campaign stuff. But he talked to everybody that he could talk to. I mean he spoke to me and he was, I think, very fair, very balanced in trying to put together an account. And it was a very quick job and I think was competent.

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HACKMAN: I guess Halberstam's [David Halberstam] the other way?

EDELMAN: And Halberstam is, of course, much more impressionistic book, in many ways a very lovely piece. It doesn't quite flesh out to being full kind of book size in its scope and in depth, but again a book that I have absolutely no objection to. I think it's.... It overstates the youth-age dichotomy of the Kennedy campaign, although as the rewriting of history takes place I begin to think that maybe there was more there than I thought.

HACKMAN: Well, maybe just looking back then over the Senate period did you feel that the press in general was given an inaccurate picture of Robert Kennedy's development in those years because they frequently talked to the old people, the old JFK [John F. Kennedy] people or some of the Justice Department people?

EDELMAN: No, no. I don't think so. I think that the press did not convey an adequate picture of his development, but not for who they talked to. It was just because of what they thought was news or what their editors thought was news. You know everything had

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to be cast in political terms—was this or was this not a break with Lyndon Johnson or a fight with Lyndon Johnson or were we trying to screw Lyndon Johnson and so you couldn't.... It was of no interest to anybody that you introduced a very intellectually stimulating bill about what happens when a person is acquitted in the federal courts on the ground of insanity. It's ho-hum. And the Vietnam stuff, the nature of his development, was sort of not really captured because he didn't speak about it that regularly for a time and because every time he did it was seen in wholly political terms rather than in terms of what he was really saying about the issue. So, no I don't think the problem about talking to the wrong fellows was so prevalent there. And in fact, I really, in talking about Teddy White, you know, I should emphasize that it's not just.... It's across the board. In the Kennedy camp there's less of a problem when you talk to the wrong fellows. The things that I said, I think, come from talking to some people who didn't have

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the whole picture, who weren't with him every day. But more important that that in Teddy White generally is the fact that Jim Rowe [James H. Rowe] is his friend, you know, and the old, really the New Deal types and the Truman [Harry S. Truman] types and so on.

HACKMAN: Okay, let me start on something else, then. You'd said last time that the beginning of every year you usually talked with Robert Kennedy about the new things you might do during the year, pieces of legislation and then selecting the areas out. Did you do anything like that in '68? Did you have time or did the occasion come up?

EDELMAN: Well, yes, we had a talk. Now I didn't write him a long memo at that point because by that time we already had enough things going so that there wasn't the tremendous need to, you know, think up a lot of new things, but.... And I should emphasize that it wasn't always the beginning of the year. Sometimes.... Remember I said that it might have been when he cause back from a trip or something like that, that we would sort of

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take stock. But at the beginning of '68 we did put in amendments which I discussed with him before I developed them and before we introduced them, amendments to cure the worst aspects of the 1967 welfare actions by the Congress. And he did those along with Senator Fred Harris [Fred R. Harris]. They each introduced a bill and it was called the Harris-Kennedy package. We already had pending a Social Security bill, a piece of which, in a sense, had been enacted in the '67 amendments. There clearly wouldn't be any further action on the Social Security fund because there just had been a major bill in late '67. So, but that was pending and his position on that was known. I had a continuing mandate to work on some health legislation, which we would have gone ahead and done. We wanted to have a package which would increase aid to medical schools on condition that they would take more of an interest in community medicine, and on condition that they would develop training for paraprofessionals so that we could change the mix of health manpower

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in the nation and also to increase the emphasis on ambulatory care, on neighborhood clinics generally. So we would have moved ahead on that. In the field of poverty there wasn't anything to do particularly, that is Economic Opportunity Act narrowly viewed 'cause in late '67 we had just enacted it, a two year extension. On hunger, we had begun to map out plans to move ahead and it wasn't so much legislative matter at that point as working with Senator Clark [Joseph S. Clark] and his Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty. Clark was up for reelection and was in effect willing to let Kennedy use the Subcommittee which had a superb staff guy named Bill Smith [William Smith], who's now in fact the Counsel to George McGovern's [George S. McGovern] Special Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs and we had charted out a series of field hearings around the country. And we went in early February and did the first of those in eastern Kentucky and we had planned to go to South Carolina and then we would have moved on to some other areas, really

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the kinds of things that the McGovern Committee has picked up on. So that that we had talked together and we had sort of charted that out as a major thing that we would be involved in in the course of the year.

HACKMAN: What month had that been worked on, I mean the plans made for that?

EDELMAN: Oh, I had talked with the Senator about that in December before I left on vacation and then again in January. Remember I was with him when he finished his skiing and I finished my vacation. We met in California and so we had some occasion to just be chatting about the things that I would be doing when I got back. Add the hunger and the welfare were, to my recollection, were major among those things. Then further he wanted to push very heavily on the jobs bill. The.... You remember the

Kerner Commission report came out shortly after that and that was one of their major recommendations and Johnson did nothing about it. Clark already had a jobs bill in that really

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was Kennedy's idea. We'll want to talk about that some time because that's an interesting bit of history that he, Kennedy, used to kid me about all the time. So Kennedy felt very possessive about that bill and would have worked very, very hard to push toward getting hearings and getting it reported out and so on. So that would have been a major item on his legislative agenda for the year. And so when you add all that up, you know. And then, in addition, he had his tax incentive bills which he had introduced the previous summer which he would have wanted to push to hearings and get that some action on. So that it comes down to the fact.... And then he would have wanted to push for action on the collective bargaining for farm labor, a bill which was already pending that had been introduced by Senator Harris on Williams [Harrison W. Williams, Jr.] of New Jersey. He was a co-sponsor of that. So that of all the things that I've mentioned the only place where there was really any need for him to introduce a new bill was in the health area,

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because the jobs was pending, the tax incentives for housing and plant location in ghetto areas was pending, the welfare—we did introduce new legislation, so on and so forth.

HACKMAN: Are there any of these things that you're talking with him about or that he's been involved in that he delays getting involved in again or puts off because he's saying, "Let's wait and see the way the political thing stacks up."

EDELMAN: No. No. In fact, it was just the opposite. I mean he mould never say, but when we got back from eastern Kentucky he was very, very nudgey, very.... pushing me every day to follow up on the things we had seen down there, to got the letters out and to Orville Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] to tell him... make recommendations and whatever else it was. You know, the other Cabinet members or trying to get other senators to take action and so on. And he was usually this way, most things, particularly coming back from a trip where he'd been sort of turned on to the problems, but unusually so at that

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time. And I think, in retrospect, it was because he was thinking that if he was going to get anything done, he damn well better get it done before he got into the presidential thing because he just wouldn't have time any more. So that, no, there was never any procrastination in anything saying, "Well, gee, I better not get into this because I don't know if I'll be able to follow it up."

HACKMAN: When we get into the campaign then, how much time do you spend on things like this during the campaign, while you're still in Washington, let's say, before you go on the road? How does this Senate.... How much Senate stuff is there to do and how does it get done?

EDELMAN: Basically—for the history books it has to be said—very little time on this stuff once the campaign starts. There was, as you remember, a tempest in a tea pot over the fact that people on the Senate payroll were working in the campaign and, you know, the fact is that the critics were right. I was, I, more than anybody, had a foot in the Senate

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office. Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] was wholly into scheduling and Adam was out on the road and Jeff [Jeff Greenfield] was out on the road and so on. Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston], who was the head of our New York office, was down in Washington full-time. But I had been saddled in January with being temporary acting administrative assistant when Joe started to go out to make phone calls and so I had become the custodian of the hiring and the firing and the approval of the bills and keeping the mail moving and all that stuff. And so from the campaign headquarters I did have to hold the hands of the girls who had been left up in the office to keep the mail moving, which there had been and it was.... We were keeping the mail moving. And then we had two American Political Science Association Fellows, whom we brought in to handle the daily legislative stuff and to watch the floor and tell me what was going on and then if there was something where there was a vote, it was important to convey that out to the Senator just on the chance that he might want to come back for it. So that I

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did spend, I suppose, if you totaled up all the phone calls and so on, perhaps an hour a day on Senate and Senate office business, but basically the problem was getting a campaign going and getting a research effort for the.... and my responsibility, getting a research effort for the campaign going, getting those professors around the country and others geared up and working on position papers and taking the stuff that we had already done and reworking it on a daily basis for press releases and speeches and all the things that were called for immediately. So I didn't, after that, I didn't have much chance to pursue the agenda that I just spoke of. What I would do is that, I would stay in touch with people and, you know, was just perhaps more to satisfy myself than anything else—what was Joe Clark doing about, or his Committee doing about, hunger now or about his jobs bill; what was Senator Harris doing to advance the welfare package that we introduced with him, these kinds of things. But there wouldn't have been....

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If they weren't working on it, there wouldn't have been much I could do about it.

HACKMAN: Okay, let me just follow into the campaign on something you'd said last time. You talked about a meeting a couple weeks into the campaign where some people were upset at, I guess, the direction of the speeches in the first couple weeks and they had to replace Walinsky with Gwirtzman [Milton S. Gwirtzman].

EDELMAN: Yeah.

HACKMAN: You remember that?

EDELMAN: Yeah.

HACKMAN: What.... Do you recall any of the specifics, what exactly people were upset with—whether specific speeches or whether...

EDELMAN: Well, I don't think that they said they were upset with the speeches, Larry. I don't think they would have attacked Adam all that directly. I mean, I think you have to take it in the context that there was a generalized belief that Adam was a hot head and that was partly out of jealousy on their part and partly out of an unfortunate, but

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rather prevalent misreading of the distinction between style and substance in Adam because Adam does tend to be rather, even, arrogant in his personal dealings and yet is very, very careful when he comes to his writing. Now what had happened I would say is this that the candidate himself, at last being freed of the shackles, you know, at last being free to attack Lyndon Johnson as he had wanted to do for months and months, was going out and he was taking Adam's stuff and he was improving upon it. You know, you remember the Vanderbilt speech where the text is tough, but quite acceptable and the Senator goes in there and he, in effect, blames Lyndon Johnson for everything extemporaneously. And then he had that Greek Theatre speech in Los Angeles which was not written by Adam at all, it was a bootleg job that Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] did while he was still working for McCarthy in which somehow this line about the Administration calling upon the darker impulses of the American spirit crept through. So that you had kind of an

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ambience, Kennedy fiercely attacking Johnson, emotionally, crowds responding emotionally, the general thing of people tearing at his clothes and that being seen on television. And somehow some of these fellows thinking to themselves that Adam, poor Adam, was egging him on to do all of this stuff. Well, what, I suppose they would say, or I don't reconstruct it with total accuracy, but what I kind of recall went on at that meeting. It was at the Senator's

home and you had everybody sitting around there. Adam wasn't there. He was probably, you know, catching a nap which he hadn't had maybe in a week. But I was out because I was to report on how the research thing was developing. And so you had Ted Sorensen, Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy], Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] if he was on board—I don't remember whether he was on board yet—Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett], Dun Gifford [K. Dun Gifford], Joe Gargan [Joseph F. Gargan], you know, Lord knows who all—Milton Gwirtzman, Dave Burke [David W. Burke], Frank Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz], Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger], Bill

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vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel], so on all sitting around. Well obviously when I name off that list some of them are.... might be good at one.... and Joe Dolan is another.... might be good at one particular thing like Joe Gargan might be good at scheduling, but might not be there for any particular purpose, and yet might still move his mouth at the wrong time. So I don't remember just who it was that spoke, but the general feeling was that the Senator had to kind of calm down, that.... They wouldn't say that to him. What they would say is, "Too much crowds. There's too much crowds. And all we see on television every night are the crowds. And, you know, it's people that don't think of you as being a statesman or they don't think of you as having anything serious to say and they're worried...." And this was particularly the case after King's [Martin Luther King, Jr.] death. "They think of violence and then they see you and that evokes violence as well." Although, this particular meeting was before King's

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death, as I recall. And so what they might say.... They might say all that and then something else might come up and time might pass and then somebody might say, "Well, you know, Adam really is so good at doing these fundamental, basic speeches and you need speeches like that. You need to, instead of giving the same thing day after day, you need every once a week to give a basic speech. So why don't we have Adam stay back here and write those speeches and let's send Milton. He's a good speech writer. Let's send Milton out on the road and he can do that day to day stuff for you. That day to day stuff isn't important anyway. It's really the basic stuff." And that was the way it was presented. I just infer that the reasoning was not exactly the way the statement was made. And I don't remember who. I couldn't tell you who would have been the one that said it that way, although my recollection is that Ted Sorensen kept saying over and over again that they'd only needed one speech writer to travel in 1960.

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HACKMAN: Did you ever get the feeling that he'd wished he'd be the one speech writer in '68 or did he ever get interested in writing speeches that year?

EDELMAN: Oh, no.No, he certainly did not want to be a speech writer again and didn't want to go.... You know, that's.... Once you've been through that.... I particularly know it now. At the time I wondered just why he was so glad not to have to do that. I thought perhaps it was a status thing, that he felt that he now should be an elder statesman. But it was really more than that because once you've had that relationship with a man, you don't want it with somebody else, really. You know, you'd be glad to advise somebody else, but you don't want to have that alter ego kind of thing. It's too... evokes painful memories. It's unnatural almost. So.... And Ted's very frank to admit, when you talk to him or perhaps you already have, that he didn't know Robert Kennedy at all as well as he knew John Kennedy that even.... I think he would even say that he wouldn't have quite known

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what to write for him on a day to day basis. I mean it's okay if it's one thing, although there was some question if he knew exactly what to write for him in the announcement statement. That's still a matter of some dispute.

HACKMAN: Well from what I've read you weren't involved that night in the announcement statement. Did you ever get at all involved? Did you get involved at that point?

EDELMAN: No. I came out early the next morning.... I mean I was involved for the last two hours the next morning, but really only peripherally. Then essentially my role was that I took the thing back in and supervised the mechanics of getting it out, getting it.... having the girls working on it and in the course of that we had some last minute editing and so on. I suppose I can claim for history five words, seven words. I [Laughter] don't know. But there was some last minute editing I was involved in, not substantially.

HACKMAN: You were talking about Robert Kennedy taking off

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from maybe Walinsky's prepared speeches. Had this been something he was inclined to do over time? Had it ever happened with any of the speeches that you'd written.

EDELMAN: No, it would of course depend on the occasion. In general he would.... I think in general he was as close to a prepared text man as I've seen in politics. He might interpolate a sentence or if it was something that he really, you know, had specially thought that he thought was especially good in the middle of the speech or whatever, he might interpolate a paragraph. But basically he was always a man who read his prepared text and he was always much better in question periods than he was delivering a

spat speech. But in the campaign situation in general, whether it's, you know, say in 1964 as well, in a campaign situation there's much more improvising than there is in addressing the dinner of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. So that there was much more of a tendency to improvise in those situation and

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then when it became his own campaign he of course had so much at stake and so much more of himself to pour into it.

HACKMAN: Do you know if anyone ever went to him during that early period in the campaign and pointed this out to him? I'm particularly thinking of the things that people criticize him about, the Vietnamese draft laws, the eighteen year old, nineteen year old thing and this. Did anybody carry this back to him?

EDELMAN: Well, I think on that particular issue what happened was that he just didn't.... At the point that he began to be criticized for it, he was not aware, having been out on the stump, that they had changed the law finally in Vietnam. And when be came back, or even as soon as we found out, we conveyed it to him, which may have been three, four days later and that was that. But, yeah, I'm sure that they talked every day and Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] at the end of the day. And, you know, I would think that Fred had come things to say, but I would suspect—

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you know, and he was very much his own man—and I would suspect that basically that was what he felt comfortable with at the time. And you'd had the problem that he was sort of enough of an honest fellow, that is enough of a kind of person who really came across spontaneous only if he was spontaneous, not a very good liar, that if somebody had urged him to.... Well, putting it the other way, he had spent all of those years going on "Face the Nation" and on "Meet the Press" looking terribly uncomfortable and people would say, "God, I mean he looks so uncomfortable on those programs." And he would come off and he would say, "If I could only say that I really think." You know, he'd gone on there and they would say something about the war and he would pull his punch and he would be critical, but not say everything that he thought. And, you know, be was like a little kid who's finally been.... or a dog finally let off the leash or a kid that's given the free run of the candy store. He just was finally psychologically

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free to say all the things he'd been thinking about. So I think it would have been very hard for anybody to really pull him off of that course, And I think, in retrospect, it didn't hurt him anyway. Indeed, let me say also, that I personally believe that he's been given far too little credit for getting Lyndon Johnson out of the running. It's Robert Kennedy and not Eugene

McCarthy that got Lyndon Johnson out of the running Eugene McCarthy was an essential participant because Robert Kennedy perhaps wouldn't have been in the race except for Eugene McCarthy but, you know, it was those.... It was the events between March sixteenth and March thirty-first that decided Johnson finally.

HACKMAN: Had anyone through the winter been saying and arguing that if Robert Kennedy went in, that Johnson would probably withdraw.

EDELMAN: Yes, some had. I couldn't tell you exactly who, but that was an argument that came up. And, of course, whatever private thoughts Kennedy had, he

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would always say in any discussion, "Now you just can't go on the basis of that. That's something you can't count on." And he had to assume that he was coming down to a Convention, head to head with Johnson.

HACKMAN: Were there any points that you were particularly stressing in the early, the first couple of weeks, say, the Kansas, the South trip, the first swing to California in the West, that you were trying to feed into Walinsky or in any other way to get something in speeches that wasn't being stressed enough?

EDELMAN: No. I mean the way it went was that he had.... Adam had built up a sort of a backlog of three or four themes. He'd been working, for instance, on that Kansas state speech, which he was very proud of, for a while, wanting that to be the, perhaps, the first major campaign speech, which it was. And what happened really was that after you got through like the first...

HACKMAN: Let me see how far this goes back. Then first week.

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EDELMAN: Yeah. Well, after you got.... No, it really was after you got through the first eight or nine days or ten days.... The first eight or nine, ten days was really the release of this kind of pent up emotion and energy that I was talking about. And there.... You didn't have to tell him anything. You know, he knew what he wanted to say and he had these twin themes of the war and Lyndon Johnson, what that had done to the American people. And, you know, he didn't need any issues. He wasn't looking for any issues. We didn't get any feedback saying, "I don't have anything to say," or "I don't have anything new to say," because everything that he was saying he'd been wanting to say for a long time. And I particular.... I wasn't particularly concerned. I mean he was saying things that I'd wanted him to say for a long time. I wasn't concerned about the crowds. I thought that he had to show that he had this kind of support and we had all agreed that he had to start with students, number one, to prove that he hadn't

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lost all his students to McCarthy and number two, because he wasn't sure whether he'd get any adults to come listen to him at that point. And when he got to California along about that weekend of March twenty-third and twenty-fourth and that was the first time he had adult crowds, and it was a tremendous triumph finding that he could draw adult crowds the same way he'd been drawing student crowds for the previous week. Well then you started to get, the next week, this sort of going on through Portland, Seattle, Pocatello, Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake City you started to get a little bit of feedback from the campaign trail that they were looking for some issues. So, for example, we put out a statement on revenue sharing at one of those stops in Utah on March twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth. And then in Albuquerque on March twenty-ninth we put out a health speech.

HACKMAN: Yeah, I've got a copy of that. I thought maybe…. That was one of the things I thought maybe you could

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just use as an example of, you know, how the research operation fed into a speech like this. What was Walinsky's what comes directly from the research.

EDELMAN: Well, what we did.... This is a good example and the revenue sharing one is another good example. A couple days earlier. These are things that I had had hanging around in my head. You know, I had been working on health stuff without any particular public results for, oh, a year and a half. I'd spent three weeks up in Bedford-Stuyvesant trying to put together a health program up there for the Bedford-Stuyvesant project and then it had never.... I had had to go back to my Senate duties and it had never come along, but I had learned a tremendous amount at that time. So what would happen would be that I would talk to Adam and probably to Fred every day and we would say, "Well now, what are we going going to do tomorrow and what are we going to do two days from now?" and so on and so forth. And

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"Why don't we look at the schedule—What are the stops?" And we'd try to be as much ahead of ourselves as possible. And they might say, "Well, this is just a whistle stop, you know, an airport, go into town, an outdoor speech. It's annoying and maybe we need a little release to cover it." And so we might think up some little release. Maybe something about how important the election was for the country or something like that. You could get away with those kind of things at least early in the campaign.

HACKMAN: Yeah, but his speech at that stop wouldn't follow the release.

EDELMAN: No, not necessarily at all. Let's back up a minute. The basic theory was that you had to have two releases a day one for the a.m.s. and one for the p.m.s. and we never did.... It also should have been the case that he did something that was basically television oriented very early in the morning, particularly when he was in the West, because otherwise he wouldn't get on

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Huntley-Brinkley [NBC's Huntley-Brinkley Report co-anchored by Chester Robert Huntley and David Brinkley] and Walter Cronkite and the scheduling never really did that faithfully. Every now and then we would manage to do something, but they just didn't.... They weren't very faithful about it.

HACKMAN: This is primarily trying to get this across to Dolan, does he have control of it enough?

EDELMAN: Well, he would try, but sometimes they just couldn't find something, sometimes there would be just geographical problem with doing it. And then.... So, but that was, at least, a consideration and I think it should have been more of a consideration. Another problem was, and this would not be Dolan's fault, was that the speeches and releases never were far.... We were never ahead of ourselves enough. If you wanted coverage, let's say you were in California and you wanted coverage around the state in the a.m.s you simply had to get it out either the previous early morning or maybe even the night before that—that is a day and a half before the paper was going to appear on the

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stands and we simply never did that. And on the occasions when we did manage to do it, when we would get an advance text in the hands of the television, let's say, the day before he was going to give it so they could have all their cameras at the place where he was going to give it, we would get good coverage. And you'd got radio coverage, "Senator Kennedy is saying today at a Kiwanis luncheon in San Jose that we ought to finance higher education in such a way." But you only got that radio coverage, if the thing was in their hands early enough.

HACKMAN: But these are basically the more substantive speeches that he's giving. They're usually on one topic where he goes into at least some depth.

EDELMAN: Well, yeah. Now I'm just trying to lead up to how we would get to something like this. So that we were trying to have two releases a day, trying to have them be as substantive as possible, trying as much as possible to have them be things that he

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actually would say because in general any release that he didn't say would only get covered in maybe local papers that got it enough in advance so that they wrote it before knowing whether he was actually going to say it or not. So if it was a release that he didn't say that didn't get out early—no hope whatsoever. If it was a release that he did say and it didn't get out early, you'd at least get some coverage. And, as I say, we had a constant problem getting things out early because of the way we worked and because of really he was very bad about clearing things in advance. He was, you know, just a procrastinator in that respect. Okay. Then every day we would talk, hopefully it would be a day or two in advance of the thing. And we would say, "Now what kind of an appearance is it in Portland on such and such a day? Where is he going to be?" If it's, let's say, the Economics Club we would maybe know that a week in advance and we would put together a major speech on economics and get that out in advance. Now sometimes it would

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be just a nothing appearance, just a court house steps or something like that, and you still had to have something substantive, so you would think "What do I know about? What do we know about that he ought to say something about?" [Interruption] I would say to myself and Adam would say to himself, "What do we know about that he can say?" And, you know, again fitting it in with the other things that I've said, hopefully doing it in a way that would get coverage. And we would understand ourselves, understand each other, that if it didn't get coverage, we'd simply run it up the flag pole again later on which indeed we did with this health thing. Okay, so I said presumably on two days before this when we talked or three days before this, "We haven't said anything about health yet in the campaign and a lot of people care about health." And so what I would do is I would either have drafted this in a rough$_s$ probably in a rough outline with the facts and some of the language and phoned it out or sent it out via...

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They carried a portable telephone Xerox. And then Jeff, probably on this kind of thing, would work it over and put it into kind of speech language. So that was basically the way that we would work on something like this. I would send him basically the statistics and the proposals and then we would talk about it on the phone and he would say, "What did you mean by this?" Or maybe to would skip the sending him something and we would just talk on the phone and I would give him the stuff and then he would write it into a release and he might read it back to me or he might not. And they would put it out. And for the early part of the campaign I had enough—all had enough in our heads so that we never had to do any research. I mean I had a file that had these numbers in it which I could just take off my desk or out of my drawer and tell him. It got to be harder later on because I did not have in my head a new proposal for financing higher education in this country.

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I did not have in my head, let us say, a proposal for how the federal government could encourage decentralization of educational policy, community control at the local level. So somebody had to be developing those. And Adam and I would basically talk and Milton, to some extent, would basically talk about the things that we wanted people to be working on so that two weeks from now or a month from now when we had that thing that we'd been able, to do off the top of our heads earlier, we'd have something that we could feed in, whether it was a new G.I. bill or some other program for helping veterans get back into.... You know, it could be anything, a balance of payments proposal, across the board. It's just that we knew we were going to run out at some point and that early in the campaign we had our leftovers. The health thing is a good example because it didn't get any play on March twenty-ninth in Albuquerque, and we came back to it in a speech at the medical school in Bloomington, Indiana, in late April and it got

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some play. It got.... On that particular occasion his exchange with the medical students got more play, but at least it was beginning to get across that he was saying some things about health. And he would have come back to it again and again and each time we would have modified it or added some new proposals, perhaps put on a covering release that emphasized the thing that he hadn't said before.

The revenue sharing I'd like to go into briefly, because that was thematic to the campaign. I mean the health thing was important. It was a thing that Americans were concerned about. But—And it was an effort to appeal to people besides just poor people, since health is an issue that goes much beyond that. But the revenue sharing was part of what Adam and I and, I would think, the Senator viewed as the really one of the major themes of the campaign, which was new ways to get money from the federal government to localities, new relationships between

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federal government and localities, trying to build new institutions at the local level on the neighborhood scale instead of the city-wide scale, trying to make the federal government less bureaucratic, in short to reexamine the entire structure of federal, state, city, neighborhood relations and to get both the money, the initiative, the psychology, all of those things changed. And our revenue sharing proposal was part of that. It was again something that I had worked on over the course of three years. We had had a task farce in New York in 1966 and through half of '67 with Arthur Levitt, the Comptroller of the state of New York, with eight distinguished New Yorkers on it: Marion Folsom [Marion B. Folsom], the Chairman of the Board of Eastman Kodak and the former Secretary of HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] Professor Robert LeKachman from state University at Stony Brook, who's the author of a book on Keynesian economics, John Davis [John A. Davis], a black economist from City University, Clark Ahlberg, the Vice

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Chancellor of Syracuse University, Richard Netzer, a professor of business administration at New York University, a fellow named Tolles [N. Arnold Tolles] from Cornell and I don't remember who the other two were. There were eight all together. And we talked back and forth on this for over a year and a half and had just.... It had sort of fizzled and we had never written a report, but I had a whole huge file and I had a bill that I had drafted which was complete and ready to be introduced. And the Senator.... For a while we had played around with waiting until a report would be written from the task for so he could introduce it as a recommendation of these eight distinguished Americans. And then I guess it got to be 1968 and that still wasn't done and the campaign started, but there it was. So Adam and I are talking on the phone, "What do we have?" And I say, "Well, I've got this thing, you know. It's revenue sharing and it's really good and it's.... It takes care of the problems that are usually

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associated with the old Heller Howard-Peckman Plan because it's got some federal standards in it, and it passes through to the cities and even passes through to the neighborhood and so on and so forth. So why don't we float that, 'cause it fits in with what we're trying to say?" See, he says, "Great. Tell me about it." So I got through all the details and then he writes it up and it's put out as a release and then in the course of other speeches later on the Senator refers to it and goes through the larger thing. "We've got to look at the whole structure," and so on and so forth. "And among what we have to do is more things like the special impact program which I added on as Title 1D of the Poverty Act, which was a direct relation between federal governments and neighborhood institutions." And then he would mention the revenue sharing and so on and so forth.

HACKMAN: Okay. You'd said that the Senator was a procrastinator on the whole clearance thing. Can you spell that out a little more?

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EDELMAN: Well, he just.... This was always the case ever since I had known him. If he had to give a speech on a Friday and he knew that it would get better coverage if it went out on Thursday, he would always start out with the best of intentions that the draft should be finished by, let's say, Tuesday or Monday so that he could go over it and they could rewrite it and make changes in it, but I would say two times out of three when it would have been. useful for him to get it out a day early, he didn't. He would just—some kind of a Parkinson's Law—fiddle with it and fiddle with it until the last minute no matter how much time had been spent on it. He could have started a month early and he would fiddle with it 'til the last minute. Every now and then on a couple of the important Vietnam speeches and oh the nuclear proliferation and Latin America, every now and then he

would get something out a day early. But as I say, two out of three times he just would fiddle with it until it didn't go out until just

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before he was going to speak. And he was this way in the campaign more so because he had more on his mind. Sometimes he would say, you know, very simple cases, "Got to give a speech tomorrow afternoon," and it's the evening before he's going to go to bed and it's for.... Well, it's, let's say, for release for the a.m.s for the following day. If you got it cleared the night before, you could reproduce it that night and you could hand it out that night or hand it out first thing in the morning. He'd say, "Oh, I'm too tired, can't look at that." Then he would look at it in the morning, and then we wouldn't be able to get it reproduced and out until noon and that would make some considerable difference on the coverage that it would get. And that would happen time after time. He would say he was too tired to look at something, where if it had been, you know, something he was doing five minutes later he would have somehow made himself not too tired to do it. And that was just, you know, it was a fact of life that happened all the time.

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HACKMAN: Was there any way you could get around that? Would he.... How much would he have to clear? Would he always clear every speech that he was going to give, and what about the releases that you were putting out that weren't speeches, but were other kind of releases?

EDELMAN: Well, he basically cleared everything. If he didn't clear it, Fred would clear it and tell him what he had just cleared. There was never anything that went out— well, never anything that he would say that he hadn't seen before he said it. Sometimes releases which he clearly was never going to read the whole thing of, Fred would clear and tell him and then he would just read it with the understanding that he ought to make some reference to it in some speech, which he usually would forget to do. Then you had another category which was releases for the local papers, which was a whole different thing, where a week in advanced you'd send around to all of the weeklies and piddling papers in the primary state—

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"Senator Kennedy's views on Social Security." And those were.... He left to me to just write them and clear myself, and they're always reprises of things that he'd said before.

HACKMAN: These are always areas he's campaigning in?

EDELMAN: Yes. He's in Indiana, you'd have a whole separate operation for, well particularly for the days that he's not in the state, but that are during the

Indiana Primary. And you just would send out his statement, not attached to a particular geographical place, his statement of day x on Social Security and you'd get a fair amount of coverage from the small town papers who will print the stuff if they have it far enough in advance. So those he didn't clear at all.

Then we got into having major position papers. We started the last four weeks of the campaign having a position paper a week and those were just too long for him to go through. And so he might read them and he might not. If he didn't, he would sort of ask what was in them and, you know, "Was that something I've said before?" "Yes." And Fred would

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go through them and Ted Sorensen would go through them and I would and, you know, when we were all sort of satisfied, we would put it out. But those were things he wasn't going to be saying and it was just awfully hard for him to take the time to go completely through them. But we had developed a working relationship over the years and he knew that in general Adam and I would have the sense that if there was something he might not want to say, we would point that particular thing out to him and we weren't going to try to slip something by him and so he gave us a great deal of latitude.

HACKMAN: Who would make the political judgments on—political in a broad sense—on what substantive speech would be given where. For instance, you mentioned what a businessman's club somewhere.... Okay, he's talking to a group of businessmen—Are you and Walinsky urging him to challenge the business club by talking on a controversial subject on who's deciding?

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EDELMAN: Well, that's a very slippery process. Essentially what would happen is that Milton Gwirtzman and I, who were running the research side of it, would meet with the schedulers and probably with Ted Kennedy and maybe Ted Sorensen every week or so or every couple of weeks and we would look over, you know, where he was going to be and we would say, let's say, "We've got something fairly basic that's nearly ready on subject x, taxes business, whatever, so why don't you find him a forum where he can say this?" That's one way that it would happen and they would just do that. Another way is that they would say or we might say, "We think it's time that he gives a speech on such and such, if you find him a forum by two weeks from now we'll have it ready, not that we've got it in the pipeline, but that we'll get it, because it's politically necessary for him to do that." And either they or we might say that. Or we might notice that there had already been found for him a speech or a certain place and whether it was already found

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for a political reason that he give a certain kind of a speech or simply that it obviously invited that kind of a speech. That was still another way that it could come up. So that sometimes we

would get instructions. “The Senator wants to give a speech on such and such, find him a forum.” Or “The Senator wants to give a speech on such and such, see which forums you got fit that and just do it.” Or the advice would go the other way to him or he would just be presented with it. It would go, you know, all of those different ways. But we had to basically Milton and I had to stay in touch with the schedulers as far in advance as possible. Adam was not in a position to have any say about all of this. He was out there on a day-to-day basis and the best that he could do would be to.... You know, we would say, “Now, Adam, coming up in the next three days is such and such.” If there was room for a variance at that point, he could do it. Or, for example, he wrote a very good speech that Senator called his “No more Vietnams” speech, which was given at the university in Indiana

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in late April. And Adam messed with that for a period of time and when it was finally done, you know, it was the kind of thing you could sort of give anywhere, and the Senator gave it on that particular occasion. So that was an initiative of Adam’s that he was able to carry through. Does that kind of answer the question?

HACKMAN: Yeah. Yeah.

EDELMAN: It’s a funny.... I mean, there’s not systematic way, at least that I ever saw in a campaign, and this goes back through some other campaigns, to coordinate scheduling and speech subjects. It’s got to be a two way street. The schedulers find some things, have some things forced upon them that you simply have to think up subjects for. And, on the other hand, to the extent that one has subjects in his mind he can try to get them to find a forum for him. And so particularly the last two weeks of Oregon or Indiana or California, Milton and I would sit down together and we would say, “Now, what hasn’t he talked about in this primary that

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we think is of interest to the citizens of that state?” We’d make a list, let’s say, crime and law enforcement, let’s say, elementary and secondary education, higher education, health, Vietnam and so on and we’d go to the schedulers, old people. “Make sure you put on one old people’s audience before the end of the thing.” You know, “Make sure you put on one thing where he can give an economics speech. Make sure you put on a PTA [Parent Teachers Association] or some group that would be interested in hearing about schools.” And then the schedulers would go out and try to do that. But there was always some hit and mine. They just wouldn’t be able to fit some of them in or they would have something Jess Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] wanted him to do or whatever put on them that we would have to make up some other kind of a speech for.

HACKMAN: Well as the campaign developed what were your, I guess dissatisfactions, with the groups that he was addressing or the areas that he was being

scheduled into. I guess in the primary states is the best way to see that—Indiana or...

EDELMAN: Yeah. I mean I wasn't dissatisfied. I thought that in Indiana he was putting too much emphasis on law and order, but that wasn't a question of the kind of forum. That was every stump speech. No, I wasn't dissatisfied. I think, in retrospect, in Oregon he made a mistake of not talking about the war, but that was a political decision and again he could have done that anywhere. I think they did a reasonably good job of—maybe not as ingenious as it might have been—but a reasonably good job of finding places for him to appear. We used to get into some arguments. You know, "Why did you...." Particularly, we were always arguing about whether he had to give a crime speech or not. I was always basically saying that he shouldn't.

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

HACKMAN: What about campus appearances through the campaign?

EDELMAN: Well, the later it got the less he wanted to do on campuses. He just himself finally after a certain

period. of time just said, "I don't want to go on any more campuses." And I can remember one day they put him into the University of California at Davis because they couldn't think of anything else for him to do that day, and he got very angry. You know, it was on his part a conscious strategy. He had to start out with campuses, as I said earlier and then he wanted to move on and talk to voters. And he didn't need to prove himself on campuses anymore.

HACKMAN: You were talking about that you were not dissatisfied in the early period when he was going out and appealing to the crowds or trying to appear with the crowds. This didn't upset you as it did some. Was there a continuing debate on how much you go to the crowds versus how much you use, particularly, media. Several people have written that it's been sort of a young versus old dispute of whether you use media and TV more or wither you do personal campaigning.

EDELMAN: Well, you mean because the young people are which?

HACKMAN: Are media.

EDELMAN: Yeah. That's what I thought, but I don't think that really. You know.

HACKMAN: It doesn't really fit.

EDELMAN: No. No. Because the, you know, the new politics maybe eschews the classic kind of sort of baby kissing politics, but it, on the other hand, it believes very strongly in going to the people. And I would think that it would have some.... It's problem would be over hooked up stuff, whether on television or alive—just wants the candidate to be genuine whether over the media or live. And I wasn't satisfied with his television stuff. I thought it was pandered much too much to what the local mood was thought to be and didn't think it was very original, what I saw of it, both the commercials and the longer stuff. And in terms of his presentation personally, I was concerned that he was giving too much to the law and order concern. But generally I agreed with his approach to things, and thought he was good. He just didn't.... In

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Oregon he just didn't have a way to turn people on. It was sad to watch. I spent more time with him in Oregon than any place else 'cause I couldn't think of what to do with myself either. I mean we were just all sort of wandering around Oregon.

HACKMAN: Was there anything you could do on the media, on the TV shots, if you were somewhat dissatisfied? Would you write memo on something like this during the campaign to the people who were working on the media side?

EDELMAN: The thing is I never knew exactly what they were doing until it was done. And I had enough to do in my own sphere. The answer is, no, I did not write memos. I'm not a memo writer. In general I don't write. I always figure I'll do my business and unless something is really outrageous, I won't stick my nose in something else.

HACKMAN: There aren't any points in the campaign then when you do sit down and write either a memo to try to get through to the Senator in some way or other parts

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of it?

EDELMAN: I probably wrote some memos to the Senator. I don't remember what they were about. If I did, it was to urge him to take a particular position. Generally speaking, what I would do is I would talk to Fred and say, you know, "There's such and such that they want the Senator's view on"—say, some newspaper. Or, you know, "I wish he would say such and such." I would usually talk to Fred. When I was out traveling,

I would talk to him. I'd just see him at the end of the day. And we had a running discussion that went on for.... Uh, really it had gone for a couple of years, about the idea of a guaranteed minimum income because he had somehow gotten into his head that her was against a guaranteed minimum income 'cause he knew that people were against a guaranteed minimum income. I must say it wasn't one of his better calculations in terms of the merits. So I had always written his welfare stuff, in effect saying that having made all the caveats that you had to have

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jobs first and that you couldn't ignore immediate welfare reform because that was realistic and could be done, but that as you reformed the welfare system, obviously the more you made a system based totally on need, the closer it was to a guaranteed minimum. And I sort of had him saying that for a couple of years, but I don't…. You know, I don't know how much he really focused on it, although he knew a hell of a lot about what was wrong with the welfare system after the '67 amendments. He really, could do extremely well on his own without any coaching. But just on that question, the guaranteed minimum income, he never could got it through his head that be really was for it. Or maybe he could. I don't know. Maybe he really had it in his head, but he would always start out saying, "I'm against it," and then he would, you know even extemporaneously, he would say, "We got to have jobs first." And we got to reform our welfare system." And he would end up really saying he was in favor of it. And maybe

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he knew exactly what he was doing. But in any event, we had this funning debate and I remember one time having a conversation with him on a bus between stops because we wanted to put this welfare position paper. Oh, and I had a bill, that's right, I had a bill that I wandered if he wanted to introduce which was a new income maintenance system, which he said he wanted to introduce. That was what it was. And you know, he would pop in one day then he was in Washington he would pop it in and then he would be able to talk about it in the campaign that he bad a new approach to welfare, on top of his jobs and everything also it would fit in very nicely. So I said, "Well, Senator, you got to understand that this bill, even though it's not cast in terms of being a guaranteed minimum income—it does not use that phrase—is in affect that." He said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, because it provides more assistance for people, all people who are in need." He said, "Well, but it doesn't discourage them from working, does it?"

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I said, "No, it's much better than the present system. It encourages them to work." "And so there's a priority on working isn't there?" I said, "Yes." "Well," he said, "that's not a guaranteed minimum income." And, you know, he was just sort of either certain in his own mind for his own reasons or sort of playing with me a little. And he said, "You go ahead and

get the bill ready and we'll put it in." So we put out this position paper in which he said he was against a guaranteed minimum income and again, as I say, really if you read it all the way through, it was that he was only against it as a matter of priorities, that he would do the jobs first and do that second. But that was the kind of running debate that we had and it shows you, you know, in effect what my role was, because those were the things that I would have a running debate with him over were substantive issues. And questions of tactics, if I had something to say about them, I might say it, but I was on the whole, I regarded myself

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as a person who was there to work on substance.

HACKMAN: I don't usually like to ask this kind of question, but I think for historians who are looking back at the 1968 thing, what did the term new politics mean to you by the time you got into the campaign and what.... Did you use this frequently when you were talking to him or when you and Walinsky were talking? Ever?

EDELMAN: No I don't.... That's not a word that was in my vocabulary. And in a sense I'm being inconsistent with myself in having used it a moment ago. No, I don't know what the new politics is. What I thought and still think is that people in general in this country are—hopefully permanently, but at least for the moment—are sick and tired of politicians. Robert Kennedy used to say that himself often, privately, that people are just sick of politicians. And they are looking, and it's perhaps something that the Kennedys have brought to this country, and others, but they're looking for just an honest man. This particularly became a search and a quest when

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Lyndon Johnson was in the White House and was such a liar, such an unbelievable, extensive, greater liar than had been in within memory, and with the consequence of killing thousands of Americans. So that it became more than just a theoretical search. It became a very practical matter to look for people to be government leaders who simply would tell this truth and, not only would tell the truth, but would be accountable for their actions and underlying that would pursue politics that didn't kill thousands of Americans. And that's really all that this new polities is as far as I'm concerned. It's the consequences of the fact that the American people got tired of being lied to. So that they wanted to be talked to directly. They didn't want to be talked to in terms of on the one hand and on the other hand. They just wanted to hear somebody who was directly responsive to their concerns. So that the style had to change. You didn't deal for the votes of people with bosses because they wouldn't stand for

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that anymore. Not that they were that many bosses left to deal with. In addition to that you were trying, in our particular case and in the case of McCarthy, to unseat an incumbent President, up to a certain point and after that to overturn an established machine, which was all going to another candidate, the Vice President. And in order.... The only way you could do that was to go over the heads of the state committees and the state chairman and the county chairmen. The only way you could do that was to go to the people directly and through the media in as many primary states as possible and then in as many caucuses and precinct meetings and other forms of challenging the established way of doing things as possible. And in turn to demonstrate to those delegates who were handpicked or to their manipulators, to demonstrate through having done that, that the only logical and rational course was to support you for having done that because in their cold self interest it would help elect their local candidates much better than a Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]

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would. And that's what the new politics was. It was forced on Kennedy by the exigencies of the situation. It wasn't something that he sat in his office or in his bed at night and figured out as being the new style or a new substance to American political life.

HACKMAN: How are you fixed for time today?

EDELMAN: Well, I have as much as you want to do.

HACKMAN: Well, we've sort of skipped around. Let me go back and do something chronological now. Can you remember talking to him after that first Kansas trip, when he came back? Did you get a chance to talk to him about his feeling about the crowds and the reception?

EDELMAN: I just don't remember if I talked to him or not. I mean, I'm sure I talked to him. I'm sure I talked to him, but usually our discussions went like this. I'd say, "Gee, the press was terrific, Senator." And he'd say, you know, whatever his business with me was: would I prepare speeches or get speeches prepared, get the professors working on a, b, c and d. "I want to give a nuclear

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proliferation speech. You can just revise the speech that I gave in the Senate two years ago." So I would assume that that was kind of conversation we had on that occasion.

HACKMAN: Do you remember anything at all then the next trips, the Southern trip? Do you remember any discussions at all with him on, you know, whether he had doubts as to whether he should go South or is this a big... Is there any sort of major debate over whether he should take a Southern trip?

EDELMAN: No. No, I think he was.... He was clear that he wanted to prove that he could generate support in places where people thought he could generate support in places where people thought he couldn't generate crowd interest or support. And that meant going to, you know.... That's why Kansas State was so important,'cause it was in the middle of nowhere. That's why these Southern places. And he chose those consciously and I never discussed them with him.

HACKMAN: Do you remember any discussions then on through the

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campaign on the South and how much you concentrated on the South, who you tried to work with there?

EDELMAN: Yeah. Oh, definitely. [Laughter] I mean, that's a different question because the first question is showing the public generally that Kennedy, comma, known radical, let's say—I mean, not really, but known person on the left can go into the South and draw a crowd without compromising his position one iota. That's almost a gimmick, but that's what those first two stops in University of Alabama and Vanderbilt were about. Later on in the campaign the issue would not be that. The issue would be really whether you would make some effort to get support in the South and the related issue would be whether you would trim it any way to do that. I was involved in discussion and I think I can say categorically, at least for that period of time, that there was no thought of trimming in any way to get votes in the South, with one exception in which is that we worked out a position on cigarettes so that we wouldn't be

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committing absolute suicide with what he'd been saying before. And even that—I mean that was trimming, but it was a position that he was sometimes going to say in a speech in Kentucky and he never got around to it. But that was the only thing that I know of where he would have explicitly, consciously thought through of saying something different in order to deal with the problem in the South. And that's not uniquely a Southern problem. It's because that's where tobacco happens to be grown. But in terms of the more fundamental questions like race and desegregation and so on, he was absolutely not going to trim on those in any way. Obviously he would try to find a rhetoric as he did, as he had in the past, of saying that we must be one country and let's try to appeal to the pride in the new South and that kind of thing to get them to do the right thing. That's again a different matter. But the fact was that we just didn't have much in the South. What the effort would have been would have

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been to appeal to all the black voters, would have been to encourage insurgencies at the Convention in as many places as possible as far as the delegate point of view was concerned.

So we had begun to make an effort to encourage what later developed into the Mississippi insurgency and I did quite a bit of work on that because of my wife's [Marian Wright Edelman] having spent three and a half years in Mississippi prior to that. So I had good contacts there and there would have been similar efforts made, I'm sure, in Alabama. Georgia I'm not so sure about because we had a deal old irrelevant fellow named Bob Jopman down there and that would, sooner or later, would have to have been faced up to. So there was a lot of thinking about the South, but I would say not much action.

HACKMAN: There was.... I've heard there was one major meeting, I believe, which Sorensen chaired, if I'm not mistaken. Can you remember being involved in that at all? I think it's in April sometime.

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Tom Johnston, Ted McLaughlin, a whole number of people were there, in which Sorensen, it's been said, was opposed to doing anything organizationally in the South, working in Mississippi or with Evers [Charles Evers] or any of that?

EDELMAN: Well, that was a meeting.... That was a meeting with white guys, wasn't it?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: With whatever white guys we could find in the South.

HACKMAN: Troutman [Robert Troutman, Jr.] was there.

EDELMAN: Yeah and Judge Riddle [H.L. Riddle, Jr.] from North Carolina. And I don't know who all else. I was not there.

HACKMAN: Probably Reggie [Edmund M. Reggie].

EDELMAN: I suppose. I suppose. And I don't think that question was ever really resolved, Larry. I mean I think that we just went along. It was too early to have to really do anything about it. I know that.... As I say, I can vouch for the fact

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that efforts were being made to do an insurgent delegation in Mississippi and I suspect that the same would have been done in Alabama. But as far as organizing anything I'd be very.... As I say, there wasn't much action. Now whether that was 'cause Ted won.... or I think the whole thing was just kind of deferred.

While you're thinking about what to ask, let me go through one parenthetical thought. It's on the question of how we came to speech subjects and the Senator's views about speech subjects. And stop me if I said this last time. There was an interesting tension between his

desire not to break new ground and his desire to say new things. Did I got through this last time? So he would say to me, "I want a speech on nuclear proliferation, don't do something new, just do a reprise of things I've said before." And then after he had given a couple days of speeches that were reprises of things he'd said before he'd say, "Geez, don't they ever have anything new to say?"

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HACKMAN: You went through this. I mean, just to this extent. That's all.

EDELMAN: Well, anyway, it's a side light. It went on through the whole campaign. So we just would try to anticipate that and give him some new stuff and some old stuff because if he got too much new stuff, he would really rebel. He would say, "Can't I say something that I've said before? It's just that he didn't really want to have to focus on clearing something, thinking through the implications, something he hadn't said before.

HACKMAN: You've talked about meeting, you and Gwirtzman, meeting with Sorensen and Edward Kennedy and O'Donnell and these people periodically. What kind of understanding did you have of what the division of responsibility was supposed to be among these people?

EDELMAN: I had, I will say, no understanding. Steve Smith went out to California very early. O'Brien, of course, moved on out to Indiana and then I guess

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showed up again in Oregon, if I remember right. I don't know.... I guess O'Donnell was working the non-primary states after a short while. So that the only people who were around the headquarters as the thing began to shake down were the two Teds, Ted Kennedy and Ted Sorensen. And I guess I always assumed that Ted Kennedy was more on the political side and Ted Sorensen was more on the issues side. And certainly to the extent that it was either necessary or wise, I mean either not to get in trouble with Ted Sorensen or 'cause I thought it would be helpful, I would stay in touch with him about issues. But he never interfered with the really day to day stuff. It was more like on those major position papers where he was essentially an ally. You know if you put on him what it was you wanted to do and convinced him, then he would see it through or help to see it through.

HACKMAN: You would take things like this to him before you would take them to Dutton, Walinsky and the Senator?

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EDELMAN: Oh, I don't quite remember. I mean, I think what we did was we would say....

I would talk to Sorensen and I would maybe talk to Fred or maybe Sorensen would talk to Fred or somehow the triangle would work itself out so that we were all in agreement that the thing to do would be to issue a position paper on Thursday for Sunday a.m.s. And it could have come in any permutation and combination.

HACKMAN: What about with Edward Kennedy then? Did you have many contacts with him in the campaign?

EDELMAN: No. No, not too much. Early on we talked some about these questions that we were talking about of whether it was too hot to campaign, whether there was too much crowd stuff. I remember being in some meetings about that and we talked about the nature of the things he would be scheduled into, whether it would be more indoor stuff or more outdoor stuff. And fewer or more motorcades and that sort of thing. But, of course, you know I left town on around May first and didn't come back, so after that point I wasn't dealing with

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anybody except, essentially except the Senator and Fred. And then Bill Smith came in to sort of take over my job along with Milton and.... Well, Milton was traveling too, so Bill Smith was running the research operation in Washington.

HACKMAN: Could you tell then when you got on the road that people in the states, local people and other people working in the campaign who'd come in from outside the state, were having trouble knowing who to go to at the L Street end when they had problems with things? I mean did things appear very disorganized—who had what assignments?

EDELMAN: Yeah. Oh, I think that's right. I mean essentially what would happen is that they would go to the state coordinator. You had Phil Sorensen [Philip C. Sorensen] and Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] in Nebraska who did a very good job and Gerry Doherty [Gerald F. Doherty] in Indiana who did a pretty good job and Bill vanden Heuvel in Oregon and Barrett Prettyman [E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr.] and Herb Schmertz

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who did a pretty bad job, and Steve Smith and Frank Mankiewicz and for a while Fred Dutton in California. So that was essentially the point of contact. And if somebody did want to go over their heads to Washington I suppose they would have had trouble finding out where to go to. And if people in the non-primary states wanted a decision about something I don't know who the hell they would have talked to. I suppose Ted Kennedy and Dave Burke and Kenny O'Donnell if they could find him. But I think there was a problem there with who had what authority.

HACKMAN: What do you make of the whole.... like Halberstam's whole explanation of the "Young Turks" versus the, I guess he used Sorensen.

EDELMAN: Well, I think it's overstated. I think it's overstated. I mean I think that there were some differences, I think that we were less concerned about the question of crowds and adulation and emotional response to him favorable, less concerned about the consequences of discussing the

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major issues of the day, particularly Vietnam which he soft pedaled in Oregon, I think mistakenly, more concerned about his discussing some other major issues, such as law and order. But these are all relative things. And Adam and Tom Johnston and I had some conversations where Adam and Tom were quite emotional, thinking that his campaign was not being run with enough daring do on the issues and the style to suit them, which I suppose I concurred, at least I don't suppose I argued with them. And Tom did go to the point of calling up Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] and trying to get to Bobby through Ethel. And they finally shipped Tom off to work on the South. And I never asked anybody, but I assume it was that they got tired of his nudging all the time. And Adam.... Adam's style was to confront Fred Dutton at two o'clock every morning and when Fred would be finished eating dinner and having a couple of drinks. And poor Fred would sit there and listen to him for two hours. And I'm sure Fred conceived

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himself as a lightning rod, that Adam was valuable and therefore he had to be listened to and that that would keep him from annoying the Senator. So they were, Adam and Tom were dissatisfied and they were dissatisfied, as I say, because they thought he wasn't talking about the right issues and because the themes were really not sufficiently developed and articulated. I think, in retrospect, they were putting too fine a point on the whole thing. And to say that that was a really generational thing because two and if I'm included, three guys were grousing is really to overstate it. It's really to overstate it. Nor did, you know, nor were we in direct confrontation with these other fellows on the thing. I mean Adam Walinsky never marched up to Ted Sorensen and said, "You're wrong" to my knowledge. Nor were they ever in a room where they argued with each other to my knowledge. And to the extent that Ted had problems about Adam he would deal with them in the ways that we were talking about

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earlier, that is he would say things like, "Adam ought to stay home because he can do better work at home because he can do better work at home." And he would never directly attack Adam.

HACKMAN: And these people, these people like Sorensen or Salinger or whoever probably wouldn't have any way to know.... I mean they wouldn't have felt resentment throughout the campaign. There would really have been no reason for them to.

EDELMAN: Feel resentment from us?

HACKMAN: Yes.

EDELMAN: No. I don't think so. I don't know. You know, there were rumors about Salinger and Walinsky. But I never saw it. And I didn't watch Pierre that much. I don't know what he was saying on the phone to his pals all day. I'm sure there was difference in philosophy. I know there was difference in philosophy between some of the older fellows. They simply were liberals of a different era. There was difference in style as well. So that my only point would be I think that

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as Halberstam characterizes it he overstates it in terms of its effect because he plays it as though there was this fight going on for the soul and body of the candidate, which was not true. The candidate had very much his own mind about things and could just as Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] had done a generation earlier, was perfectly capable of listening to all of it and making up his own mind. And that's the major deficiency with Halberstam and Witcover's book is they leave you with something of the impression that this was the poor dish rag who was being kneaded and wrung by all these opposing people. And of course there was no such…. not the case at all.

HACKMAN: You had said, I believe, last time that at that one early meeting when Walinsky came in and Edward Kennedy was upset by something he wanted to do that you know that there probably would be trouble between those two. Anything in the campaign there.

EDELMAN: Well, that was the day that he announced, the Senator

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announced, and I forget whether.... You know you'd want to look back and, see whether I actually said I knew there would be trouble between those two. I had certainly had the feeling that Adam was not the one one would send to see Edward Kennedy on a delicate mission. No. There wasn't much later on because Adam wasn't around. And Adam would come off of a week of travel and he would come in and he would grouse, but he was grousing about everything. He would ask me what the people that were working for me were doing, why they weren't producing—just make a general pest out of himself. But you know, that's him.

HACKMAN: Okay, shifting to something else. What's the immediate impact of the Johnson withdrawal on your operation and what it's doing and on the Senator from what you can see?

EDELMAN: Well, first thing we started to do was doing research on Humphrey instead of Johnson which we started doing right away. The second thing, in terms of our operation, was that there became a much more

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acute need to look for issues. The war was clearly going to be harder to discuss because of the initiative that he had taken and the north Vietnamese response. So it was necessary to sort of start talking about what were we going to talk about. It's significant, for example, that we put out a release on hunger during those interim days after Johnson is out and before King is dead because we're sort of looking for issues, and that was something the Senator had been interested in and we hadn't gotten around to it yet. And he himself, the much more important thing is that Kennedy himself, as has been written and it's true, lost his issue, his thing, his reason for being in the whole thing in a way, although he obviously had much broader concerns about the country. But he was a little stupified. He was doing very nicely going along attacking Johnson and loving it and didn't need to be told what to say, didn't need to be primed, you know—only thing he needed was maybe substantive speeches, set speeches, to

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get a little different kind of news, but in terms of his stump style he was all set. Well, now he lost all that and it was, you know, not just losing the Johnson thing, it was losing the war as well which was the second piece of it. So you had the simultaneous thing of him having to kind of grope for a new stance, a new set of themes, and of the research operation groping in exactly the same way which we were doing anyway, but now much more urgently. It only lasted five days in a sense, because Martin Luther King was killed on April fourth and it was very clear to us that somebody had to begin speaking to the issues which resulted in his death, I mean which he was concerned about. And that was even more the case after Johnson said he was going to call the special session of Congress didn't. So, you know it's been said that Kennedy began to find himself, find his pace and his niche as a spokesman for the under privileged after that. But in a way that was very natural, not that other politicians were doing it

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very well. Gene McCarthy was not doing it—well, was doing it badly and nobody else was doing it. But that was natural, he had been thinking and talking about these things for such a long period of time and it was really the major thing that there was left that was wrong with the country that he could talk about. And a man had just.... a great man had just died for it. So

it was very easy for that to become his theme and also in a way it was all that was left for him because he wouldn't be comfortable talking about really the inflation or the balance of payments or acute air pollution. You know those are things he could refer to and issue press releases about, but they weren't what was in his heart. So that's I think essentially what happened.

HACKMAN: Did you have any hints ahead of time that the withdrawal was coming?

EDELMAN: I didn't.

HACKMAN: I don't know if you can generalize on this, but what's the reaction within the whole

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Kennedy camp to the withdrawal? Does it seem to make things easier? Does it seem to make things harder?

EDELMAN: Well, the first reaction was that it made things easier. You know it was electrifying. We all went back to the headquarters that night after the speech and you know talking about what we would do. And of course, the Senator, who had been in New York, had called everybody in the country. At first we thought we had it knocked. Then when we didn't get that many people who came over, we realized that it was a little more complicated and that whether people liked Humphrey or not, they were not about to jump on the Kennedy bandwagon just like that. Whether they thought Johnson was ploying it and might come back in, whether they thought that Humphrey.... that they just better.... had sane interest in wafting and seeing, I think was basically what it was. So that from initial elation we realized that in many ways it had become harder because from

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an initial feeling that yay, we were no longer trying to seat an incumbent President, a task labeled by political pundits as impossible, we also had lost out sitting duck and that became clear quite quickly. And that was a problem for the Senator in his daily life and it was a political problem because Hubert Humphrey—the animus just didn't flow against Hubert Humphrey the way it did against Lyndon Johnson. And as a matter of fact, as you know, then as a result of that, because people couldn't hate Lyndon Johnson any more, Robert Kennedy became the focus of a lot of hate, a lot of sort of floating hostility in the country. And so that was almost injurious, I would say injurious to him.

HACKMAN: Do you know anything about attempts then in the days after the Johnson withdrawal to work something out with McCarthy, again, or with Humphrey?

EDELMAN: No. I don't. I don't, particularly not with Humphrey. There were constantly

efforts made to make overtures and openings for McCarthy, constantly. And after the Indiana primary, after the

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Nebraska primary, the night the Senator was shot and so on. And of course McCarthy wasn't having any of it. And to be fair about it Kennedy was doing it with his tongue way up his cheek, because he wasn't ever going to come out for McCarthy. I would have been very surprised if he had come out for.... if things had gone differently and he had then come out for McCarthy.

[Interruption]

HACKMAN: Did you talk with the Senator before, or did you then, about his opinion of Humphrey? What do you know about that?

EDELMAN: He liked Hubert Humphrey very much. He always respected him as a person. He used to say very often that be couldn't understand why Hubert had no understanding of the effect of his own mouth. I mean this is over the years. He'd say very often, he'd say—he'd come in the morning, he'd say, "Do you know how long Hubert spoke last night at so and so?" We'd say, "How long?" He'd say, "Forty-five minutes." Or "Do you know what Hubert

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did last night? He gave one speech of twenty minutes and then he gave another speech of twenty minutes, then he gave another speech of twenty minutes." And he'd say, "Isn't that," you know, "fantastic," or "unbelievable," or some word like that. But despite all that, he liked him very much. We tried to get Humphrey to go with him to Latin America in 1965 and at one point thought that he'd convinced him to go and obviously Johnson didn't let him go, but was hopeful about it and welcomed it and not merely for political reasons, because he would have enjoyed this company. But by 1968, despite his respect and his affection for Humphrey he was convinced that Humphrey had been used and damaged and maybe even destroyed and in addition was convinced that he had to discredit Humphrey, that that was his major opponent. And so when Humphrey talked about the politics of joy following March thirty-first and so on, Kennedy, every stump speech he would attack that. I think he felt some discomfort about it, although perhaps less than has

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been attributed, because I think that he just knew that that was what he had to do. But there was a much greater respect for Humphrey as a human being than there was for McCarthy.

HACKMAN: Did the research operation ever get at all involved in putting together

something that could really be used against McCarthy, let's say, in reference to his possible ties to his special interest that you mentioned last time and some of the other people have talked about, or against Humphrey to some of the shenanigans that some of the people around him have gotten involved in so often?

EDELMAN: Yes. We had material on all of that.

HACKMAN: Ever considered using it at any points during the campaign or was it used?

EDELMAN: The Humphrey stuff.... The Humphrey stuff was never used. That was presumably to be used later on, if at all. But we had people working on that and material accumulating. It was more issue oriented than scandal oriented. It was more just

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documenting his position on various issues and his limitations, but there was a little of the other as well. We had documented the various troubles that his fellows had gotten into, just too have it in case. The McCarthy stuff, I will say for the history books, was done and was used. Not the special interests stuff, because he'd been sufficiently clever about that that you couldn't pin it on him. Special interests stuff I went and talked to Senator, former senator Douglas [Paul H. Douglas] for an hour one day. And everything that he had said just didn't check out. I mean you just couldn't pin it on McCarthy because McCarthy basically had taken positions within the committee which were not on record in any way, or at least not on record in any available way. But we did do the research on McCarthy's voting record, which was then printed having been done by other people and which he had then accused us of being responsible for and which we denied. So that's for the history books.

HACKMAN: Okay, let's talk about the King assassination then.

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When did you see Robert Kennedy after that happened?

EDELMAN: Did it happen.... What day of the week was April fourth?

HACKMAN: The fourth. And it'd be on the seventh he's back in D.C. and you're touring.... You go to Fauntroy's [Walter E. Fauntroy] Church.

EDELMAN: That's a Sunday.

HACKMAN: So that's a Sunday. So it's got to be what? A Wednesday.

EDELMAN: Thursday. Fifth, sixth, seventh. Thursday night. Yes, I would say that I must

have seen him on Saturday for the first time after that. I believe we had a.... Well, I was at his house for some reason or other. I guess we had a meeting of everybody and he talked about wanting to go to church and I called up Walter and arranged for that. And Marian, then my fiancé, and I and Ethel and the Senator went to church at Walter's and then he went for a walking tour, which hadn't been planned, through the area afterwards. But we didn't talk much about it.

HACKMAN: Did you discuss what he might do in terms of a

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statement to the nation or in terms of something in D.C.? Is there anything like that that's discussed?

EDELMAN: No, not really. We probably did, but I don't remember. He had already.... I mean there'd been a lot of discussion the night that King was killed at what Kennedy ought to do about it and it was interesting because while we all fussed around Washington, he himself directed that a plane be chartered and sent which was nice and also rather characteristic. Then it was decided that he would give that speech in Cleveland the next day which Sorensen wrote half of and Adam wrote half of and it really was one of the best things that Sorensen ever did. It was beautifully done, beautifully done and he phoned it out and it was, it is a marvelous speech. And then, he of course stopped campaigning at that point after the speech in Cleveland. And there was discussion about what he would do when he came back, but, you know, he was in Indiana was the problem and he was stuck in Indiana for four weeks and so basically he rejected

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doing very much about the thing because he felt that the first thing he had to do was get through Indiana and that people in Indiana weren't very interested in this whole subject. That's another reason why he appeared to falter for a period of time is because he was just not in his milieu. And so I remember, what, oh gosh, it would be three weeks later finally his being pissed off that Lyndon Johnson hadn't given his message to Congress, and I remember sitting down and writing the beginning of what I hoped would be a long speech going through all this. And, oh, in fact I remember talking to Ted about it—Ted Sorensen—and Ted being very much in favor of it. And that's what finally evolved into the position paper on the cities which I think was the.... Was it the.... I guess it was the last one we issued at the end of May.

HACKMAN: You don't remember any of his comments on that walking tour about just the destruction, the physical, you know, his gut reaction to I guess that?

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EDELMAN: No.

HACKMAN: Well, what about his relationship with King over time? Do you remember his comments through the ‘64 to ‘68 period?

EDELMAN: He wasn’t very close to King. I don’t know exactly why, but he wasn’t very close to him. And it may have been because he felt some guilt over that wire tap business. It may have been that for whatever reason he didn’t entirely trust King. It was partly because he and King, were on opposite sides of the fence and each was going his own thing, and not in an adversary position, but in different institutional positions. So that they couldn’t be all that close. King was prepared .in 1968 and certainly preferred him to all of the other candidates by far. But they weren’t personally very close.

HACKMAN: Do you know how that endorsement had been worked out or who had been...

EDELMAN: No, I suppose that my wife might have talked to King about it. I don’t remember. Some other

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people perhaps did too. We were assuming I think on pretty good evidence that he would endorse us at the appropriate time. We didn’t particularly want it, you know, early in the campaign, didn’t think it was all that helpful. You know, everybody knew that Kennedy had the Negroes. So I would suspect that it probably hadn’t been pursued in any official stay. It’s just that we kind of assumed it and that Marian had some basis for conveying that the assumption was valid. I should emphasize that Kennedy and King I’m sure had great respect for each other.

HACKMAN: Well, you talked about your feelings about the law and order, the way the law and order issue was used in Indiana. Was there any way you could try to change this? Who was writing this?

EDELMAN: Nobody was writing it. He was using it. And the only way you could try to change it.... That’s really where the pattern of Adam getting after Fred every night until four in the morning was

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and it was mainly over that issue. You know, Adam would say, “Well, Fred, he did it again today. What are you going to do about it?” And Fred would say, “Well, Adam, you know this is the way it is and you’ve got to get through Indiana before we can go anyplace else.” And Adam would say, “The rest of the country’s watching. They’re all out there. You know it’s being written about in the New York papers and you might get through Indiana but you might not have anything else left when you get through Indiana.” And it would go like that every night, sort of like a broken record. And while I was there I would chime in and say that I

agreed with Adam. While I wasn't there I would call up Fred and call up anybody I could think of to call up and say, you know, "Can't you do this on this?" because I was very disturbed. The fact was, it should be said, that he was doing other things in Indiana at the same time whether it was the confrontation with the students at University medical students over the question of

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blacks where he was very straight, whether it was the time at Purdue which I was present at, where he gave an absolutely magnificent extemporaneous answer to a nasty question about rioting, where he ended up saying, "Under those circumstances I can understand if somebody riots." And the place just came apart, the ovation, because it was so.... His explanation was so dramatic and eloquent. So that the law and order has to be viewed in the context that Indianans were very, very much aware of his sympathy for the plight of the Negro in this country. And it has also to be said that he talked about law and order and social justice and that he said exactly the same thing in the black neighborhoods of Gary that he said in rural places or before the white, blue collar workers, and that the whites chose to hear law and order and the blacks those to hear social justice. And he was cheered in both places. So that, you know, he was consistent. He was straight. And in terms of the pure meaning

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of words as opposed to the pejorative sense of the phrase law and order, he was not being a demigod. Nevertheless, I was.... I didn't like it, having made all of those justifications.

HACKMAN: You made the statement earlier that you felt Gerry Doherty did a fair job of putting the organization together in Indiana. What, from the time you spent out there, the reports you were getting back, what were the problems in this, in putting together Indiana in that sense?

EDELMAN: I don't know much about that. I just say very briefly that I think they were the same problems you encounter anywhere. You just don't have bodies. You know, you don't have people in some parts who are doing the local campaign thing, the doorbell ringing, the envelope addressing, the phone calling and getting the materials out—the bumper stickers—getting the posters up, everything that's done locally. Having perhaps the local coffee klatches and teas. You know, all of these things. But the problems were that in some places

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that was a little thin and also that.... Well, that was it basically.

HACKMAN: In the several days that you were out there, what kinds of things did you get involved in? You, I believe you'd said that you went out because there was

some part of the campaign that you didn't feel was functioning well—getting out local releases and things like that?

EDELMAN: Yeah, I didn't volunteer to go out. The.... I guess it was probably Milton and Ted.... Milton was already out there and Ted Sorensen. Oh, I know what it was. Milton was out there and he was going to get married. I think...

HACKMAN: Boy, it was a campaign for marrying.

EDELMAN: Yeah. And so he was going to disappear for, oh, you know, maybe a day and wanted me to cover for him. That's what it was. And he was going to come back to Washington for that week. So he had been working the local releases and I just traded places with him for that week. That's what happened. And so I did that. And then, as I said, last time, the

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Senator finally registered on him that I was there when I was supposed to be working in D.C. on the D.C. primary and he sent me back. But I didn't go out there because of any terrible problem.

HACKMAN: What impact could you see, if any, that Goodwin and O'Brien had an the campaign when they came in in April?

EDELMAN: I couldn't tell you about O'Brien because it's just not my department. You know, I assume that what he brought to it was better organizational skills. Goodwin, as you know, came in to do television and the impact that he had was whatever the quality of the television was.

HACKMAN: You'd said you didn't think the TV stuff was that good from what you saw. Is this all the way through?

EDELMAN : Uh huh. One impression from what I saw was that considering the fact that we had John Frankenheimer [John M. Frankenheimer] and Goodwin himself is a very ingenious and original fellow, that, they were producing stuff that looked to me like stuff that lots of people had been doing

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for a long time. You know, bringing together a bunch of American Legion people to talk to him about problems or, you know, just sitting him down with a bunch of housewives. What the hell is there about that? So I didn't think that they really had any very new ideas.

HACKMAN: How did you come to the assignment for the District of Columbia primary

then?

EDELMAN: Well, I had worked on D.C. affairs in the office and I guess the day that the Senator announced Joe Dolan called me up and said, "The Senator wants you to start working on the District." And that was the whole thing. I said, "Gulp, what does want me to do?" He said, "Well, I suppose see about it." [Laughter] You know, "See what's going on and see if he should be in it." And so I, you know, found out what day the primary was and it just happened that at exactly that time Channing Phillips [Channing E. Phillips].... There'd been a lot going on and people were urging Channing Phillips to get into it, and he considered

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himself a Kennedy man and he started trying to get in touch with me. And I kind of checked him out and discovered that everyone thought he was a good man and then went through an elaborate series of negotiations with Joe Rauh about what we would do with McCarthy and worked out a thing where it would be a joint slate, Kennedy-McCarthy slate, where we would each have half the delegates, and kept clearing that back with—I was I think dealing mostly with Steve Smith at that point. He hadn't yet gone to California. I kept clearing that back. And so on and so forth. And then McCarthy repudiated the whole thing. This is all over really not more than five or six days after the...

HACKMAN: Right the eighteenth to the twenty-fifth. I think it falls apart on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth.

EDELMAN: Yeah. And, you know then, another point to the negotiations was that there was a thing called the Citizens for Peace and Progress or Democrats

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for Peace and Progress here which had some very good people in it and some people who were rather hard to deal with who were either anti-.... You know, sort of Kennedy haters on the left or just sort of generally neurotic the way reform citizen politicians can be sometimes. Maybe went and took lessons on the West Side of New York. So there was a question of getting them to come around. And the negotiations were kind of three cornered me and Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.] and I suppose Channing was there with me. Phil Neul was kind of his agent. And then trying to deal with this fellow Don Greene, who kept screaming that he was being sold out. And, as I say, we were able to come to this arrangement and able to, in the course of coming to that arrangement, to reassure the Democrats for Peace and Progress that we would want to work with them and that their neighborhood elections would be taken into account in our selection of our delegates. And then the thing blew up and I don't remember exactly

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how it happened, but it was clear, very clear, very soon that McCarthy was leaving the field to us here for obvious reasons. He couldn't get any votes in the black community here as opposed to Kennedy and just, you know, could see that. But it was too bad because he torpedoed efforts that were going on in a lot of places which his local people had cooperated with to do joint Kennedy-McCarthy stuff against Johnson, or later on against Humphrey, and constantly torpedoed those which is a story that hasn't been adequately told because, you know, it was petty and it was politically rather silly and it was just plain old mean, uncooperative. So we were, along about the last week in March, clearly in the position of going it alone here. The Citizens United for Peace had been formulated while we still had McCarthy in it. And we had some of the delegates who would be McCarthy delegates were chosen and we allowed them to stay on the slate if they wanted to with the understanding that they would

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be.... Well, I guess that there would be a unit rule and that we would have control, I think was what it was. So that even though they might be for McCarthy the whole delegation would vote for Kennedy. And then we just commenced to pick up the rest of the delegates and got Dan Mayers to run the thing and Dave Martin and they cause in and kind of did it, But I really stayed with it, putting in a fair amount of time until we had the slates picked for both delegates and for the Democratic Central Committee and basically saw to it that we were responsive to the community's statement of its choices.

HACKMAN: Did you get personally involved in getting any of any of these.... a number of people who came off the Johnson slate and onto the CUP slate, Flaxie Pinkett [Flaxie M. Pinkett] and a whole number of people?

EDELMAN: Yeah, I think I called Flaxie, if I remember right. She was.... I mean Kennedy was her first love anyway. So she was more than delighted. And she's a person who has some credibility in the more militant

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part of the black community so that was all right too.

HACKMAN: Was that a problem, getting someone who could do something at the grass roots with.... I've seen a couple memos in the black book on D.C. and some people are making the point that you don't have any black people in the leadership of the Robert Kennedy or the CUP effort in the District of Columbia.

EDELMAN: In the staffing, maybe.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: Yeah, that was true, ‘cause they tried to get this guy, Coates [James E. Coates], who’s now the President of the Board of Education and they thought they had him signed up and be never.... He never showed up a day for work. And the.... See, the thing is there were these local headquarters around. There was a girl named Lola Singletary who had a headquarters up on H Street Northeast and so on and Willie Hardy [Willie J. Hardy] and people like that who were making an effort, but they

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weren’t in the central headquarters, so it wasn’t visible. And it was damn tough. You just, you didn’t know who turn to really to do that. You had Channing and Flaxie going around giving speeches every day and they were the candidates so that it was clearly a black thing. And I think, in retrospect, probably, you know, anybody who was interested in the black part of it wasn’t coming into the headquarters on Connecticut Avenue anyway. So I don’t think it was that big a deal.

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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Peter B. Edelman Oral History Transcript – RFK #2
Name List