

Paul H. Douglas, Oral History Interview – 6/6/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: Paul H. Douglas
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Biographical Note

Douglas, a U.S. Senator from Illinois from 1949 to 1967, discusses his memories of John F. Kennedy as a Senator and as President, including his work on labor and civil rights legislation, among other issues.

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PAUL H. DOUGLAS
2909 DAVENPORT STREET, N. W.
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February 2, 1972

Mr. William W. Moss
Chief, Oral History Program
John F. Kennedy Library
380 Trapelo Road
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

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for the John F. Kennedy Library with no restrictions
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wish.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul H. Douglas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul H. Douglas

PHD:vcd

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Paul H. Douglas

Paul H. Douglas

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Oral History Interview

with

The Honorable Paul H. Douglas

June 6, 1964
Washington, D.C.

By John Newhouse

For the John F. Kennedy Library

NEWHOUSE: This is a tape recorded interview with Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois. It is being done as part of the Oral History Project of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. The date is June 6, 1964. The place, Senator Douglas's office in the old Senate Office Building. The interviewer is John Newhouse of the Senate Foreign Relations staff.

Senator, your association with President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] dates at least to his earliest days in the Senate, I believe, doesn't it?

DOUGLAS: That's right. 1952. I had met him several times when he was in the House but really began to see him right after he was elected to the Senate in 1952.

NEWHOUSE: I've been told that you took a special interest in him in those early days.

DOUGLAS: Yes, I did. I thought him an extremely promising Congressman and was greatly pleased, of course, with his election over Mr. Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge]. I think I was very helpful to him in recommending Theodore Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] as

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one of his assistants. Mr. Sorensen had been a staff employee of a subcommittee which I headed on the railway retirement system and he, with Robert Wallace [Robert Ash Wallace], who is now assistant secretary of the Treasury, did a magnificent job. Our committee was closing down and Sorensen was more or less without permanent work and Kennedy was looking for a staff. I recommended Sorensen to him and the two, of course, hit it off perfectly from the very beginning. So that I personally feel very gratified at having put the two in touch with each other.

NEWHOUSE: What sort of Senator was he in his early formative days?

DOUGLAS: Well, he was ill a good deal of the time with his back injury and I think for a year or so he was really absent. I can't quite remember when that was. I think it was around 1954.

NEWHOUSE: 1954, I believe, is right.

DOUGLAS: Yes. Well, I think he was a cautious Senator. He followed the rules of the Senate – did not speak up very much, kept himself in the background, and I think was

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probably not particularly notable up to say 1955 or 1956. He published his book which he wrote while he was ill and, of course, that established him.

NEWHOUSE: 1954 was also the first example of the Senator's – according to his biographers, at least – breaking with local interests in order to take a national position.

DOUGLAS: I guess that was true. Yes, I guess that was true. He made a speech supporting the St. Lawrence Seaway although that was opposed by the people who were interested in the Port of Boston and who thought that it would diminish the volume of traffic going out of and in to the Port of Boston. I think that is true. Yes.

NEWHOUSE: What would you say was his first effort in the Senate of real consequence – his first essay into important legislation?

DOUGLAS: Well, I think that the part he played in helping to turn back the Mundt [Karl E. Mundt] proposal for changing the electoral college. I would say that was the most notable thing which he did. I can't quite remember the year that occurred. I think it may have been 1956.

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NEWHOUSE: That was 1956.

DOUGLAS: 1956. Yes. And this was a proposal which would have greatly diminished the power of the big states and the big cities in the nomination of a President. I opposed it because I felt that cities were already grossly underrepresented in the State legislatures and since the State legislatures were in the main controlled by the rural areas, the urban and suburban areas were underrepresented in the House of Representatives, because the legislatures laid out the Congressional districts to favor rural areas and small towns. While, of course, the equality of representation of all states regardless of size in the Senate also puts the big states at a disadvantage there. I did not want to have this system extended to the Presidency. While it may be true that the cities have slightly more than proportionate influence upon the nomination of the President and indeed upon the election of the President, I felt that this was only partially compensatory for the disadvantages which the large cities suffer in the State legislatures and the Congress.

NEWHOUSE: Now you wrote after this battle was finished to the then Senator Kennedy, "Your

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leadership in that battle was most skillful and decisive."

DOUGLAS: He did extremely well in a very clear analytical discussion and he made the point that the proposal which involved a combination of selection by Congressional districts – each Congressional district the unit – and, also proportional distribution of the States, that this would strengthen the conservative elements in both parties. In both parties. And would greatly diminish the industrial and urban influence on American politics.

NEWHOUSE: What do you think the significance of this issue was in terms of President Kennedy's development as a political figure? Did it have any?

DOUGLAS: I never thought of that before, but it may have started him thinking – well, I shouldn't say that – he probably started thinking before. But it may have crystallized a good deal of thought.

NEWHOUSE: You were associated with him over the years in the area development program?

DOUGLAS: Yes, that bill started in the Labor

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Committee of which I was then a member. And I steered it through the Labor Committee originally and then I was appointed to the Senate Finance Committee before the bill came to the floor of the Senate, and decided to accept that transfer. Senator Kennedy then took over the bill and acted as the floor manager of the bill, I making one of the main speeches. He did very well on the bill and we were successful in passing through the Senate the bill towards the close of the session. This again was I think in 1956. But the House refused to permit it to be taken up so it failed passage and the next year I had the bill transferred to the Banking and Currency Committee for action, of which I was a member and so his formal relationship with the bill ceased then but he was always a good ally.

NEWHOUSE: He developed this into a key issue, did he not, in 1960?

DOUGLAS: Yes, in 1958 we passed it again and again in 1960 through Congress. Each

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time it was vetoed by the President – President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] – and when President Kennedy went down to make the crucial campaign in West Virginia, which was the hardest hit of all the states, he adopted this as an issue and pledged his support to it so that this earlier work however laid a basis for the work which he carried on and which helped him successfully to win the West Virginia primary.

NEWHOUSE: Did you have dealings with him on this question after the election?

DOUGLAS: Oh, you mean after the elections in 1960? Oh yes, very much so. He appointed a committee to consider the problem of depressed areas and made me the chairman of it. We held a number of hearings and we also worked hard on the program. I brought the program down to him in Palm Beach around New Year's day as 1960 was going out and 1961 was coming in. We recommended a number of things. First, we recommended that the surplus foods which were being distributed to people on relief

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should be extended to include more nutritious articles of food, such as vegetables, and the rest of which there was a surplus. Second, that the food stamp plan should be introduced in a number of counties over the country. It was a pilot project to see how it would work out. And third, that we should have an area redevelopment bill which would help to bring in new industry by means of low interest loans to the areas which were also lacking in public facilities designed to build up employment such as industrial water and industrial parks, which could be promoted as well.

As a matter of fact the broadening and liberalization of the surplus food program was the first thing that the President did after he was inaugurated. He came back from the

Inaugural Ball, as I remember, signed an Executive Order, and we speedily moved on food stamps and then the area redevelopment bill was made number 1, S. 1, and given priority. We succeeded

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in passing that through Congress over the opposition of most of the Republicans, although not all. And he signed it into law in the spring, so that this work which started back in 1955 came to fruition in 1961.

NEWHOUSE: I wonder if we can turn for a moment to civil rights legislation. The civil rights bill may conceivably become another memorial to President Kennedy. There has always been some controversy over his position in the 1957 civil rights legislation. I wonder what your view of his position at that time was.

DOUGLAS: Well, I have to speak very frankly on this subject. I happened to be the leader of the Democratic group in favor of a strong civil rights bill and we agreed to cooperate with the Republicans under the leadership of Mr. Knowland [William Fife Knowland], who was then working on this measure. They had a very good bill. There were two provisions in the bill to which the Southerners took a special objection. One was Title III

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which in general gave the Attorney General the power to protect the civil rights of individuals. There was a big attack on that. And then there was...

NEWHOUSE: That was defeated, wasn't it?

DOUGLAS: That was eliminated.

NEWHOUSE: Senator Kennedy supported the bill, I think, didn't he?

DOUGLAS: I think he supported Title II, but I think there was also a provision which the South wanted to have inserted to provide for jury trials. We were somewhat afraid of that, mostly because of methods by which juries were selected, with negroes seldom sitting on Southern juries and also, because the jurors would have to go back into their home communities and be subjected to popular pressure of the community around them. So many of us had the feeling that this would greatly weaken the enforcement of any civil rights provisions on voting. They would never get a jury which would impose penalties for persons who interfered with the right of

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negroes to vote. Senator Kennedy voted for that jury trial amendment. I would say that he was not particularly ardent in his advocacy of civil rights. I would hold periodic caucuses of our group. He never attended those caucuses. He moved as a free lance in this respect and moved very, very cautiously indeed. Nevertheless, in 1958, when he asked me to come up and speak for him on the civil rights issue in Massachusetts, I did so.

NEWHOUSE: Was it apparent at that time that Senator Kennedy was considering the Presidency?

DOUGLAS: I had not thought of that although the 1956 Democratic Convention where he had nearly been nominated for Vice President had obviously put that idea in his mind. But it was not until 1958 and early 1959 that it became evident to me that he might be a candidate for President.

NEWHOUSE: Well, Senators Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] and Symington [(William) Stuart Symington] voted against the jury trial amendment in 1957 and as you said, Senator Kennedy voted for it. Did you think then that this

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reflected his point of view or was it a political judgment?

DOUGLAS: Well, I felt that he did not want to break relationships with the Southern Senators. I felt that.

NEWHOUSE: Shortly before this episode, he made a speech at Harvard and said that compromises and majorities and procedural customs and rights affect the ultimate decision as to what is right or just or good. A politician, he said, resents the scholar who can with dexterity slip from position to position without dragging the anchor of public opinion. Would you say this position was consistent with the Senator as you observed him?

DOUGLAS: I never heard that before. It is very hard for me to tell precisely what that means. I don't know whether he was praising the politician or praising the scholar.

NEWHOUSE: I think in context he was vindicating the position of the politician.

DOUGLAS: Yes, that may have been a subconscious defense of his own position.

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NEWHOUSE: In what single area did the President as Senator take the most active and significant part?

DOUGLAS: Without question it was on the Labor Management Act of 1959. He was chairman of the labor subcommittee of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee and the bill came over from the House and he reported out amendments to it. He had the assistance of Professor Archibald Cox of Harvard, but there were many of the most difficult problems in the whole field of labor relations that he covered. Particularly the field of the secondary boycott. There are many variations of the secondary boycott and so many difficult questions on both consumer boycotts and worker's boycotts that there are only half a dozen professional students who I think have the competence really to deal with the subject. As I listened to Senator Kennedy expound the provisions in the bill which he recommended, I thought it was the most masterly performance that I have ever heard on labor law and particularly on the secondary

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boycott. It established him in my mind as a man with a truly first rate intellect.

NEWHOUSE: Was it apparent by then that his higher interests were related to his being the manager of this legislation in the Senate?

DOUGLAS: Well, I think so, by that time. That would be 1959. As a matter of fact, one member of his staff approached me in that year as to whether I would write an article saying that a Catholic could be President; that there were no insuperable political barriers in the way of a Catholic being President. I was very glad to do this because I felt that it was about time that we got over that false shibboleth and made it possible for qualified people of any religion to be considered for the Presidency. I wrote that article which appeared, I think, in Pageant magazine. And I concluded that since the request came from a person close to (I forget whether it was Sorensen or Feldman [Myer Feldman]), who was close to Kennedy that this was a feeler, so to speak, that he wanted to have thrown out

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in advance of his candidacy. Then that fall, fall of 1959, he made a tour through the Midwest. I introduced him to a group of about 40 Democratic leaders at a luncheon in Springfield, and then introduced him to a larger meeting out at the State fair grounds. By that time, it was obvious that he was running for the Presidency. That would be 1959.

NEWHOUSE: Some have suggested that there was a pattern of opposition developing in the Congress then to his Presidential ambitions, for instance, on the vote on the McClellan [John L. McClellan] so-called Bill of Rights to the Kennedy-Ervin [Samuel J. Ervin, Jr.] bill. Some Senators who normally followed the leadership in this case – Senator Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] – broke away and voted with Senator McClellan and some suggested that this was a quiet effort by the Majority Leader to try to dim Senator Kennedy's luster.

DOUGLAS: It was obvious that Senator Johnson also wanted to be President and I think Johnson at that time was very anxious to retain Southern support and on the whole

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at that time he represented the more conservative faction of the party. Senator Kennedy was coming forward more and more and adopting the position of the more liberal, progressive sections of the party.

NEWHOUSE: Senator, do you recall whether Senator Kennedy's becoming chairman of the conference committee instead of Congressman Barden [Graham A. Barden] was also interpreted as an effort to identify him closely with the bill, so that if the bill was less liberal than liberals wanted, he would suffer from it?

DOUGLAS: That's quite possible. I had never thought of that. But that is quite possible. It would have to be a subtle effort. But he did magnificently and in the conference he was successful in having most of the bad features of the House bill eliminated. I would have voted against the House bill but I felt that with the changes which were made in conference, that in good conscience I could vote for the bill, and I did so, although I was criticized a good deal for it. I think that Senator Kennedy

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deserved tremendous credit for taking most of the bad features out of the House bill.

NEWHOUSE: Was this a general Congressional view that he had performed with this sort of high ability?

DOUGLAS: There was general admiration for the high intellectual level of his work and we also felt that he was on the liberal side.

NEWHOUSE: Did you support him in his Presidential aspirations?

DOUGLAS: I did not go to the Convention in Los Angeles. I was a delegate but I told the leaders of the party, both committee minority and Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley] that I did not think I should go because I expected Governor Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] to be put forward as a candidate and I was running myself and I did not want to be forced to take a position hostile to Stevenson. I had opposed him in 1952 and I didn't want to be compelled to do it again. I did privately inform the leaders of the party in Illinois that I thought that Kennedy

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was the best candidate, both the ablest candidate and the best candidate and in my opinion would be the strongest candidate so that while I was not a participant at the Convention, it was known inside the delegation that I was for Kennedy rather than for anyone else.

NEWHOUSE: Did you see much of him during the campaign?

DOUGLAS: Well, every time he came to Illinois I was with him. We spent a day together in Southern Illinois, early October, and then an evening meeting in Springfield. And then there were two days touring northern Illinois. The first day was through central Illinois and the second I think was around the periphery of the Chicago metropolitan district and another day through Illinois at a big meeting in the Chicago Stadium.

NEWHOUSE: How did he do?

DOUGLAS: He did splendidly in each place. His speeches were excellent and very concise. He had tremendous energy. And he made a fine impression. No question.

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NEWHOUSE: You carried the State, as I recall, by something better than 400,000 votes.

DOUGLAS: 441,000 votes. Yes.

NEWHOUSE: His majority was very thin in Illinois, 8,000. This means that in effect you brought him home.

DOUGLAS: No, I wouldn't say that. I may have assisted him but I would certainly not claim that.

NEWHOUSE: I meant in Illinois.

DOUGLAS: Well, it's very flattering of you to say so, but I don't say this. I may have helped the ticket a bit but I don't think I brought anyone home. The reason for his low vote was primarily downstate. He did very well in Chicago itself. I thought he did quite well considering everything in the suburbs which are Republican. A lot of young Catholics interested themselves in his candidacy and formed local committees and worked very hard. The trouble was in the strongly Protestant counties downstate. I did my best to counteract this in all the speeches which I made. I really devoted more time to speaking for him than I did speaking

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for myself.

NEWHOUSE: And you expected a larger majority for him?

DOUGLAS: Yes, I expected a majority of about 100,000 and the poll of the Chicago Sun-Times indicated that and their poll has generally been quite accurate because they poll virtually every county in the state. But they didn't catch this last surge of anti-Catholic feeling. I still feel very bitterly about that development because of all kinds of anti-Catholic literature was distributed in small towns and rural precincts pushed out those last days. And I may say the action of the Puerto Rican bishops trying to get people to vote against the Muñoz Marin [(José) Luis Alberto Muñoz Marin] party in Puerto Rico at about the same time did not help at all because that was spread around. It was said, "You see this is what will happen, if you elect a Catholic."

I was confident – I am a Protestant – I'm a combination of Quaker and Unitarian – but I was confident that President Kennedy would be an independent man and would not

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be under the control of any group so this made me feel that it was both my duty and my opportunity to try to off-set any of these fears which I believed were false. I think his record in office shows that he was pro-American and in no sense pro-Catholic.

NEWHOUSE: Senator, you have been very closely identified with the question of preserving the Indiana dunes. I wonder to what extent you might have been able to involve the President in that.

DOUGLAS: I certainly tried to and I think I was successful. The Indiana dunes are one of the most beautiful places in the United States. They are only 40 miles from Chicago. 40 years ago there was a stretch of 20 miles from Gary to Michigan City completely untouched – one of the most beautiful areas in the United States. Then subdivisions began to creep in. Finally two steel companies, National Steel and Bethlehem Steel, bought areas and they started to put in plans for big steel mills.

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I was asked by local people in Indiana if I would try to introduce a bill for a national park. I said that, "You should consult your Indiana Senators." They said, "We have, and they are opposed to it." I said, "Well, let me try." And I asked Senator Capehart [Homer E. Capehart] if he would take the lead. And at first I thought he would. I intended to support him. But he surprised me and said he couldn't do so. So in default of any better person taking up the battle, I did. This was in 1958 or 1959. We didn't make much headway but President Kennedy came in.

In the meantime, the Indiana people wanted a port which would have ruined large sections. They made plans for two finishing mills and two basic steel mills. I fought the port and wanted to have the alternative views of the park. One time I think the White House was

ready to approve the port. I made a special trip to see the President at the White House and showed him photographs of the area and told him that the 20th

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Century was one of rapidly expanding metropolitan areas and the great need was for beautiful recreation areas close in to the metropolitan cities. The national parks were fine but they were thousands of miles away from population. I think he slowed up the movement for a port. Finally, in the summer of 1963 a compromise was proposed by him under which there would be a port under certain conditions. Namely, that if they had one basic steel mill, there would have to be 10 million tons of coal annually going through the port and shipped out on the lake. Or if two steel mills, then 5 million tons of coal. Frankly, I felt that this condition could not be met by the State of Indiana or by the companies involved. But it also provided for taking over two large subdivisions – Dune Acres and Beverly Shores – and several other lands, pieces of which, with the Indiana State Park of 2100 acres, would create a total park of 12,000 acres. I accepted that as the second best. We have been trying to get that through since. I can say that on the whole his influence was

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on the side of trying to get a park

NEWHOUSE: I see. There was some story about a walk in the Rose Garden you had with him on this which materially changed the situation.

DOUGLAS: Well, I don't know whether it changed it or not. But the park is very close to my heart. It is still not certain that we can get the second best, but I never felt that he let us down. I felt on the whole that he used influence on our side, particularly when we had a Democratic Governor and the Democratic Senator, Senator Hartke [Vance Hartke], all pushing for a port and the Governor opposed to a park. Senator Hartke favored a somewhat different park.

NEWHOUSE: Were you also associated with him on tax reform and the tax cut measure?

DOUGLAS Only indirectly. I felt very keenly that the various loopholes or truckholes in the system should be plugged. I think he felt that way too. In 1962 I wanted to have a withholding tax on dividends

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just as there is on wages and salaries. The President had favored that originally but this got eliminated along the way and I think the President decided not to fight very hard for it. I felt that I should go ahead and do my best and....

NEWHOUSE: This was what year, Senator?

DOUGLAS: This was 1962. And I must say in this effort we did not get appreciable help from the President.

NEWHOUSE: In 1963, I believe he certainly made the point that tax cut legislation, together with tax reform would be his first priority on legislation.

DOUGLAS: That is right. I helped him on both features.

NEWHOUSE: What happened to the tax reform?

DOUGLAS: Well, that was largely eliminated along the way.

NEWHOUSE: I meant why was it eliminated, since the economy seemed to be rebounding in 1963?

DOUGLAS: It is very hard to remove special privilege. There are so many deeply rooted special privileges in the tax system: the depletion allowance, the unlimited

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charitable deductions, the capital gains tax, the whole series of inequities, injustices, which in the main, favor those with large incomes, and they have a deep economic interest in maintaining these special favors and will oppose any effort to change them. The general public tends to be uninformed, busy making a living, diffused, disorganized. It's very hard for them to bring their political influence to bear.

NEWHOUSE: It sounds as if nothing unexceptional then was working to defeat the...

DOUGLAS: No, the President was not against reform in any way. And it may be that the situation was such that not even he could have saved it. I didn't blame him at all. It is simply an illustration of the difficulty that we get into.

NEWHOUSE: I see. Senator, you have observed a number of Presidents from this end of Pennsylvania Avenue. I wondered if you would comment briefly on some aspects of President Kennedy's administration such as his Congressional relations and the

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effectiveness thereof; his relations with the bureaucracy and their effectiveness as perhaps as a starter.

DOUGLAS: Well, let me start in somewhat a different way. I would say in slang that

he had a lot of class. He had much more class than Truman [Harry S. Truman] and Eisenhower and probably more than Roosevelt [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. He was not as warm and outgoing as Roosevelt but I think he probably had a much better mind than Roosevelt. I would say he had one of the best minds of any man who has ever been President.

NEWHOUSE: When did you begin to sense that?

DOUGLAS: Well, I sensed it in 1959 when he made this speech on the labor management act and discussed secondary boycotts in a way which was a combination of politician and Ph.D. I think it was an amazing performance. I felt this throughout his term as President. He was well read; he had appreciation of the arts; he had a subtle dry humor; he had nerve without limit, so to speak. Now, I

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think, perhaps the fact that he was such a polished fellow, in manner, probably made some members of Congress a little afraid of him. And also perhaps the knowledge that he had great wealth behind him, made some feel he was distant. He tried hard to be on good terms with Congress – frequent coffee hours, personal visits, and the rest. He made every effort. I think perhaps the elder statesmen in the Senate, of whom I am not one, had the feeling that here was a youngster who had come into the Senate and in eight years had parachuted into the Presidency, so to speak. And they may not have taken him as seriously as he deserved to be taken. I think he was a great President, myself. But I think there was an element of coldness perhaps which many of the members felt towards him. I don't think it was his fault.

NEWHOUSE: Do you think he was comfortable?

DOUGLAS: Not too comfortable with members of Congress, no. On the surface very

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comfortable, but I think internally probably not too comfortable.

NEWHOUSE: What were his relations with the bureaucracy? I remember I think it was Dawes [Charles G. Dawes] who once said that the cabinet, for instance, or the members, are the natural enemies of the President. I wonder if you could contrast President Kennedy's relationships with the bureaucracy and the executive branch generally and the way he dealt with it with, say, President Roosevelt and perhaps the Eisenhower system.

DOUGLAS: I don't know whether I am competent to deal with that because I am not a member of the official class. I think over the years there has grown up a

real bureaucracy that wants to run the country and which is not merely content with executing policy but which wishes to make policy and which therefore resents a President who wants to go ahead and make policy of his own and they find various subtle ways of trying to prevent innovations from being carried

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out or if they are ordered to do things, use various subtle means of somehow deflecting them. I think this is conspicuously true of the President's desire to have more negroes, qualified negroes, hired in the Federal service. I know some of the difficulties which were raised about that. In other words, I don't think it is so much the cabinet, but the second, third and fourth echelons down below. I think this is a real danger for the future in this because these people are anonymous; they are not under popular control and while we need many civil servants to execute policy, I don't think they should be makers of policy; they can advise, but I don't think they should be dictators of policy.

NEWHOUSE: Do you think the President was able to gain control of this bureaucracy in the period he was in the White House? Or did you notice any change?

DOUGLAS: I'm not competent to speak on that.

NEWHOUSE: One of his biographers has suggested that the then Senator Kennedy's cautious

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and judicious approach toward his Senate responsibilities earned him the admiration of most of his colleagues including these elder statesmen you speak of and even membership in the so-called Senate Club.

DOUGLAS: I'm not a member of the Club, and I don't know who is admitted to it. I would not say so from external observation. I think they realized that he was a pretty shrewd politician but I don't think there was any real warmth of affection....

NEWHOUSE: He did obtain the vacancy on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1957 which surprised some people, I think.

DOUGLAS: That is right. Yes, that is right. In this respect, Senator Johnson was very helpful to him. And both on that and on the Joint Economic Committee.

NEWHOUSE: It seemed to many people that as Senator and as a candidate and as President Mr. Kennedy rejected the stereotypes of conventional political images of either side – liberal and conservative. What did this mean though in terms of his

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impact on issues and legislation as you saw it?

DOUGLAS: Well, with the exception of the Trade Expansion Act and the tax cut provisions, until civil rights came on the scene, I think the impression which he gave was not deeply involved emotionally in the issues. That is the impression that he gave. I'm not certain that is true. But that, I think, is the impression – that he was somewhat distant and cool on these matters. He had control over his emotions.

Summing up, I would say that as John Kennedy became progressively more aware of the problems which the American people faced, he became much more sympathetic towards helping the people. We should remember that he grew up in a wealthy family, went to a select private school and to Harvard, and that until he went into the service, he was in a sense insulated from the ordinary problems and difficulties which people face and unacquainted with the economic and social

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handicaps under which large numbers of Americans labor. As he realized these human difficulties of poverty, unemployment, unequal power, deprivation of opportunities to rise in the world, this developed him and he moved, I think, progressively onward and became more and more an advocate of human rights and less a somewhat cold patrician. Let's put it that way.

Now, I have vivid personal memories of him – a vivid memory of his standing in the rear of the Senate discussing with great skill the labor features of the Labor Management Act of 1959 and on the whole, I thought it was completely correct. I remember campaigning with him in Illinois with the cheering crowds and his composure and how, in between the meetings as we rode around, he would ask very profound questions on monetary and banking policy. I think of him that day at the White House when I showed him the photographs of the dunes and these are very warm and vivid memories. Of

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course, the rest of the nation and indeed the rest of the world admired tremendously the determined and yet relaxed way in which he handled the Cuban crisis in the fall of 1962 which was a masterpiece of standing firm and yet giving Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev] a chance to save his face. I think this steady nerve of his was greatly needed and it became more warmed with human sympathy as time went on.

NEWHOUSE: Thank you, Senator Douglas. This has been a tape recorded interview with Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois as part of the Oral History Project of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. The date is June 6. The interviewer is John Newhouse.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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ADDENDUM AS OF SEPTEMBER 18th

In re-reading this interview I feel that probably I was much too reserved about my feelings concerning President Kennedy and my judgment concerning his emotional attitude toward problems and persons. I think I gave the impression that he seemed to be somewhat cold and reserved in manner. He was reserved. I think this is due to the British standards of good breeding that one should never show emotion. But I would prefer to think that he was able to master and control his emotions rather than not have them. I can say that during the campaign strain - the great pressure of crowds and time complications and so forth - he seemed always to be completely composed and not the slightest degree upset or thrown off balance. I think he was probably what the psychiatrists would classify as primarily an introvert, and since I am an extrovert, it is not

always possible to understand those who hold themselves in very tightly.

Perhaps I best expressed my feelings about this on the Senate floor and I enclose a copy of my remarks from the Congressional Record for December 11, 1963;

(See attached)

Paul H. Thurman

of President Kennedy's major programs would be the finest tribute we could offer to John F. Kennedy, unlike most of the stunned faces across the world, we can deliver on that one. Sometimes we feel almost sacrilegious in wishing that someone who has departed this life could tell us what he would most like to have us do in acknowledgment of his passing. I believe, without being insensitive or callous, that we can ask ourselves, "What would he like to see us doing at this moment?" I have a suspicion at this moment he would prefer to have the Senate debating the civil rights bill.

After all, can we honestly admire President Kennedy's vision without also admiring his plan for the Nation's children? Can we admire his courage without admiring his departure from the "conventional wisdom" of economics? Can we admire his human understanding without admiring his civil rights bill?

I do not say that we can admire only those men with whom we are in full agreement. But President Kennedy was not a man who ever demanded absolute conformity.

On the contrary, John F. Kennedy was a strong man—so strong that he understood fully that there are very few questions that can be given absolute answers.

His courage and vision were matched by thoughtfulness and deep insights. There was one thread of continuity in all his programs and I think it can be briefly stated like this: He sought to allow each man to fulfill completely the potential granted by his Creator.

This really was his essential goal, and the strength he showed in pursuing it was the strength of flexibility. This is what I believe history will record about him. This is what I like to believe history will record about him.

And how incredible will historians find the fact that this man's record in Congress and this man's goals in the White House were thought by some to be "soft on the Constitution."

Many have said that John Kennedy had an understanding of history. Indeed he did. He sensed, I believe, those forces which affect the destiny of nations, not merely of men.

There is one lesson of history he would hope we would understand and, understanding, react to.

There have been other great nations on the center of the world stage in the centuries which

precede this, and historians indicate that not all of them had to fail. Not all of them needed to become footnotes in history, except that they dilly-dallied over making necessary reform until it was too late.

This is the kind of responsibility which happens to be ours in the Congress. It is for that reason, I suggest, that our best tribute would be to move on in the pursuit of those goals which he so dramatically portrayed for us.

Like it or not, be it fair or unfair, this Congress has acquired a reputation for inaction. Whether it is fair I do not propose to debate.

But the unhappy fact remains that we have the image of a do-nothing Congress. This is not so much because we have done nothing. It is more because we have done nothing with those pieces of legislation on which the Nation's attention has been riveted—the pieces of legislation that events and the late President dramatized before the country.

This is the situation and we cannot escape it. So essentially, my eulogy of President Kennedy consists largely of a pledge of support to President Johnson.

I join the new President in an appeal for legislation that will be a true memorial to President Kennedy—legislation of that whole litany of recommendations he gave us; legislation in civil rights, in aid to secondary and elementary schools, in youth opportunities, in tax reform—legislation that will be as bright and lasting as the flame that so many earlier mentioned, which burns now on that hillside in Arlington.

If I can be confident of anything, it is that for at least this once I can confidently speak the universal voice of the people of Michigan. Without exception, they would have me express to the Kennedy family their understanding and sympathy. For my own family, I assure each of them of a continual remembrance in our prayers.

ADDRESS BY

Hon. Paul H. Douglas
OF ILLINOIS

Mr. President, the predominant impression which I and many others formed of President Kennedy during the 15 years in Washington with

him was his extraordinary composure under strain. During the strenuous and critical days of the 1960 campaign, when I was frequently with him, I never noticed the slightest sign of irritability. Similarly, in the hot legislative struggles which we have had in Congress when the President was sorely tried, he seemed to be completely free from excitement or resentment, nor did he ever blame those who differed with him or who bitterly opposed him.

Some people thought this was a proof that he did not have deep emotions and that he was not deeply concerned either with people or with issues. To my mind this was not so. It did not indicate an absence of emotions, but rather a mastery over them. The Scottish playwright, J. M. Barrie, once defined courage as "grace under pressure." If this is so—and this is certainly one attribute of courage—then John Kennedy possessed courage to a supreme degree.

This quality paid off to the greatest extent in the Cuban crisis of last year. Under that tremendous strain the President might well have been pardoned had he lost his head. He was determined to prevent any danger to the United States and to take the responsibility for an attack on the Cuban missile bases, had that been necessary, but he was also anxious to prevent a nuclear war, if this was possible. He therefore gave Khrushchev an opportunity to back down without too great a loss of face. By following this course he skirted the precipice of total war by a hair's breadth. He was able both to obtain the removal of the missiles and a reduction in Russian forces—and at the same time keep the peace. A lesser man could never have done this.

The second impression I had of the President was his extraordinary intelligence and mental ability. This was demonstrated in the way in which he handled the debate on the puzzling issue of secondary boycotts in 1959. This is the most difficult issue in the whole field of labor relations and the President came to the correct conclusions down to tooth of an inch. It was like seeing a skilled surgeon operate.

Without any reflection upon other Presidents, I believe that he ranks along with Wilson, Lincoln, and Jefferson as among the four great intellectuals in the history of our Presidency. He was widely read and a deep student of history. He was broadly versed in the poetry and litera-

ture of the Western World. He was also interested in the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. He was not ashamed to be interested in these things. He was, instead, proud to have these broad interests and to be a practitioner of some of them. He was the one public figure of our time to win a Pulitzer Prize in history. He honored those who had surpassing achievements in their fields and sought to make the American public respect them more. He raised, indeed, the whole level of our intellectual and cultural life.

His political programs were designed for the good of America and the world. It is well to create tangible monuments which will bear his name into the far future. But I think we can best create a memorial for him by our devotion to the great tasks of civil rights, the abolition of unemployment, and a more abundant life for the great mass of American citizens.

ADDRESS BY

Hon. Claiborne Pell

OF RHODE ISLAND

Mr. President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy had the sixth shortest term of any of the 34 Presidents who preceded him. He was the youngest man ever to hold that high office. Yet, history may well show that he did more than any other of our Presidents to raise the sights and elevate the spirit of our National Government and the aspirations of our people, not just in our own United States but throughout our world as well. He set a marvelous and harmonious course of domestic growth and fairness and of external peace. And, now, as we think and talk of him with grief in our hearts we find ourselves overwhelmed with sadness because his inspiring mind and presence, his vigor and sparkling life, have been taken from us so abruptly.

Our own State of Rhode Island particularly grieves because Rhode Islanders knew President Kennedy and his First Lady as friends and neighbors of long standing. He had vacationed in Newport before the war. He had received his PT boat training at Melville on our Narragansett Bay. He had visited our State in the