

Wendell H. Pigman Oral History Interview – RFK#5, 08/04/1969
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Biographical Note

Wendell H. Pigman was Legislative assistant for Senator Robert F. Kennedy, 1964 - 1968. This interview covers the Water Quality Control Act debate of 1965, Water Quality Control Act legislation, and water shortages in New York City, among other topics.

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By Wendell H. Pigman

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Wendell H. Pigman. – RFK #5

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Fifth Oral History Interview

with

WENDELL PIGMAN

August 4, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta W. Greene

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

GREENE: Could you begin by explaining how Robert Kennedy, or you on his behalf, first got involved in the Water Quality Control Act debate, which would be in 1965?

PIGMAN: Well, this was the major water pollution bill to come up in the Senate for the year. And prior to that time I think we had been involved in the Lake Erie Conference. When I had first joined the staff and discussed the various areas which I would work on, water pollution was one of the issues. And then following the Lake Erie Conference and his increasing awareness of the problem of water pollution, it was assumed that he would want to do something with regard to the bill to express his strong support for it. Now he wasn't a member of the public works committee, Senate Committee on Public Works. I think it was assumed that we would do something with the bill. He had talked about funding and federal assistance in the Lake Erie Conference, and this was the way in which federal assistance would be made available. And there was, up until the 1965 act, a very limited amount of money available for water pollution control and construction of facilities. I think I was alerted by one of the Senate staff members to the fact that Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller would testify. In view of that, the senator would naturally want to testify as well, and did so that year, I believe. He gave testimony to the committee indicating his views on it and asking for a number of specifics for New York state.

I assume that that was Ron Linton Ron M. Linton who called me at the time. It was either Ron Linton or Dick Royce Richard B. Royce one of the two. Those are the guys that I worked with on the committee primarily, primarily Ron, who was a friend of the Kennedys that campaigned for the Kennedys in 1960. That was a fairly good working relationship. In addition to that, when the Senate bill was finally passed, it did not have in it all of the provisions that we thought would be useful. New York State as a larger state with a willingness to put more money into the water pollution field would not get the money under the federal bill, because there was a limitation restricting half of the money to cities of less than fifty thousand or so. I contacted Dick Sullivan Richard J. Sullivan on the House side to see what could be done on the House side to put in provisions

in the bill that would aid, that would help the city and New York State in general. As a result of that work and in working out a formula--I think that Dick and I discussed a formula, and I think I also checked it out with Ron Linton to see whether they would accept it at the conference--we worked out a formula that allowed all the money appropriated above a certain level, that there were no restrictions on city size or state in getting these funds. And that was included in the bill that was passed.

The senator had called up John Blatnik /John A. Blatnik/ who was chairman of the committee and had asked him to see me so that I could have a chance to talk over the suggestions we had for the bill. John was his primary contact on that; he knew John and John I think also was a '60 campaign supporter. And Dick Sullivan was staff director of the committee, was from New York and from the Buckley organization in Bronx basically. So there was a connection there as well, and they were favorably inclined toward any suggestions that we had. So that that, combined with Congressman McCarthy's /Richard D. McCarthy/ efforts on the committee, and also the efforts of one or two other New York congressmen, I think led to the acceptance of the formula. And this is, I think, the major contribution of the bill, which was not done in the Senate at all, in fact, although the Senate was willing to accept it when it came to conference. The unfortunate part about that is that I think that the appropriations have never matched to date the authorized amount in that bill, so that New York State for one has been stunted in the amount of money that it could get otherwise.

GREENE: Did the senator and Senator Javits /Jacob K. Javits/ agree on the bill essentially? Was Javits ...

PIGMAN: I don't think that we even talked to Javits about the bill. I don't think there was. . . .I mean he may have talked to Javits privately, but there certainly was no contact at the staff level. . . . We had some disagreements with Governor Rockefeller on the bill, and in a situation like that Javits would prefer to stay out of it. That was not a topic that we discussed. I mean we really didn't coordinate with Javits on legislation by and large. I mean there were exceptions, but I don't think on the water pollution bill. . . . When the state pure waters bond issue came up on the referendum in--I forget the exact period--we were asked by Rockefeller if Kennedy would support it. Everyone was asked--Javits and Kennedy and just about everybody in the state. And we did /support it/. It was a really bipartisan effort to get the bond issue passed, which is a little unusual because just as a rule of thumb you don't generally support bond issues. They're not popular and they're not necessarily the best way of funding things. We did in that case. So New York State took the lead in water pollution at that time, water pollution control, I should say.

GREENE: What about Congressman Reid /Ogden R. Reid? Was he involved in this law, Ogden Reid?

PIGMAN: Reid? Ogden Reid?

GREENE: Yes.

PIGMAN: Not that I know of. I don't know what he'd be. . . . He may have been, but not with our office.

GREENE: It seems that he was one of those that testified on the bill.

PIGMAN: On the House side?

GREENE: Yes.

PIGMAN: Well, I'm sure there were. . . . I don't know who testified on the House side because I wasn't present for the hearings. I mean it wasn't the sort of thing that you attend. As a rule, you don't attend House hearings if you work in the Senate unless it's a very unusual matter. I was working directly with Dick Sullivan and Blatnik was chairman of the committee. And that particular committee had members such as McCarthy who knew what we were interested in doing. So it really wasn't necessary. Reid may have testified, but I just don't. . . . I suspect a number of people testified. I suspect Ottinger Richard L. Ottinger testified. But I don't know.

GREENE: What about Congressman Jones Robert E. Jones in the committee?

PIGMAN: What about him?

GREENE: Was he helpful to you? I know he had a fairly good relationship with the Kennedys.

PIGMAN: Yes. I don't recall whether. . . . Well, I don't know what his role was. I never contacted him. But it's true, Bob Jones is a friend of the Kennedys. I just don't know of his particular role. But, you know, it's the sort of thing where I don't know exactly how Chairman Blatnik and Sullivan did it, but it was done, and that was the right thing. In other words, once we got the formula worked out then it was added to the House bill and held in conference.

GREENE: Do you remember the debate about the pollution investigation results? There was a disagreement on whether they should be published and available to the public if they were subsidized in part or totally by the federal government. Would you get involved in that at all?

PIGMAN: On which side was this debate held, on the House side?

GREENE: Yes.

PIGMAN: No. I mean, there were discussions on that subject at the Lake Erie Conference. It had come out that--it was stated. . . .The senator hit Rockefeller for failing to make available the information he had on industrial pollution. And as a result of the hearings New York State opened that up to the public. You know, as I say, I didn't follow the debate on the House side so that I didn't. . . .It's not the sort of thing which I would be familiar with.

GREENE: What do you know about the arrangements to hold one of the hearings in Buffalo? Was that something that Senator Kennedy ...

PIGMAN: Yes, this was. . . . We asked to have the hearing held in Buffalo at the time, asked Linton. And Linton worked it out with Muskie /Edmund S. Muskie/. They were planning to have one in Cleveland. They were having a series of hearings and partially as a favor to the senator /they had one in Buffalo/. The senator had come out in favor of the Lake Erie Conference. And because of our interest in the area, he'd written to Secretary Celebrezze /Anthony J. Celebrezze/ urging that the conference be held. As a result of that interest we were asked--I think we were asked whether we wanted to have it in Buffalo. And we said, yes, we sure did because it was a good forum for the hearing.

GREENE: Did you have any other contact with Celebrezze?

PIGMAN: It seems to me that Celebrezze was at the White House Conference on Water Shortage and indicated a lack of knowledge about that subject at the time.

GREENE: Was this kind of typical of him?

PIGMAN: I don't know. The few contacts that I had have not been. . . . I did not feel that his role had been particularly constructive in regard to water pollution. The comments I heard from guys who knew his role better than I did at that time in the Public Health Service and Water Pollution Control /Federal Water Pollution Control Administration/, indicated that they just felt that he was totally uninterested in the subject. I can only report secondhand comments plus the few observations where I didn't. . . . Of course, he was pretty much on his way out even then, and it was understood, you know, in circles that he just wasn't playing a strong role in the administration.

GREENE: Was Gardner /John W. Gardner/ an improvement?

PIGMAN: Well, shortly thereafter, and I don't know if it's the '65 bill or the '66 bill that transferred water pollution control to the Department of Interior, so that was as far as Gardner went. Well, on water pollution control HEW /Department of Health, Education and Welfare/ didn't have much to say. I do know that in general, though, because of the fear that HEW would lose their air pollution control functions, that they put more effort into it and did some general attempts to work on the environment. When Senator McNamara /Pat McNamara/ died, is that his name, the one from . . .

GREENE: Right. Michigan.

PIGMAN: . . . Linton left the committee and went to work as a consultant to HEW under Gardner and generally. . . . He put out a report on environmental pollution and emphasized the role that the department should play. They eventually evolved the air pollution control functions into the National Air Pollution Control Administration. So I think that Gardner was more aware of this sort of problem than Celebrezze. And HEW had taken a black eye in losing water pollution control to Udall. Udall, by contrast. . . .

Udall talked pollution and environment all the time. He was not inhibited. He was trying to pick up as many of these functions as possible for the Department of Interior, because it was. . . . Until the Vietnamese war began to gobble up the money, this was a very popular issue. And it looked like we were going to do a great deal about it in '65 and '66. But as the money began to disappear, a lot of the work was stymied.

GREENE: Just getting back to this Buffalo conference, did you work on the preparation for it and the planning?

PIGMAN: Well, if you mean did I work on setting up the details of who attends and all that, no. What I did was to find out who was going to be there and to arrange for Senator Kennedy's appearance, that is, to the timing of his appearance. He went on first. He preceded Rockefeller in testifying. We also got copies of Rockefeller's testimony ahead of time, and the report from the water pollution people downtown as to what the problems were in Lake Erie so that. . . . What I did was to draft the senator's remarks to the conference. And in that sense we helped prepare for it, but not in the administrative details of setting up the conference.

GREENE: Did you have any technical advice on the preparation of the senator's remarks? Did you consult anyone?

PIGMAN: Well, we talked to the water pollution control people downtown at rather great length. We also talked to some of the people on the Bureau of the Budget who had worked on it. Let's see. I don't think we called on any. . . . There was also a guy named Stan Speziack /spelling unconfirmed/ from Buffalo who was quite knowledgeable. He was from one of the private conservation groups and knew a great deal about Buffalo and he helped us in providing information on the Buffalo area in particular. But we didn't have a lot. . . . You know, there weren't a lot of advisors on this at the time. The trouble with most of the citizens groups is that they're about three steps behind the people who are preparing, who are holding conferences of this type. Very often you find you're feeding them more information than they're feeding you, so that they're not particularly helpful. I think I had a witness from. . . . I asked to have a witness from Cornell University testify at the conference. And he turned out to be a complete dud, which may have been, one, a reflection of Cornell University's relationship to Rockefeller, or, two, may have been the individual. But they were supposed to have a big water pollution control effort, and this guy was very, very innocuous and not very helpful.

GREENE: I know he approached--this is Professor Charles Gates of Cornell--I know that he /Gates/ also approached Senator Javits. Was this a normal procedure for a witness wanting to testify, to approach a senator to sponsor him, or was it. . . .

PIGMAN: He approached Javits on what?

GREENE: Well, he apparently approached Javits to sponsor him as a witness. This was in Javits's own testimony; he mentioned this. And I had never known that.

PIGMAN: I'm not clear on when this is supposed to have ...

GREENE: Well, at the Buffalo hearings in Senator Javits's testimony, which followed Senator Kennedy's . . .

PIGMAN: But was Javits there literally? I didn't see him at the meeting. We may have left before he testified.

GREENE: No, he was there.

PIGMAN: And did he testify?

GREENE: Yes. But would it be uncommon for a witness to approach a senator and ask him to sponsor him? Is this common?

PIGMAN: Well, it's conceivable that in order to get him on at that time that it may have been a question of timing more than anything else. And I was. . . . I'm just looking to see if Javits was a member of the committee. No, he's not. Well, I suspect then it was just a matter of getting him on. I suspect maybe the professor had asked the senator if he could testify since we had urged the professor to be there. It may be that he had asked him to go on in the morning so he could get away--I don't know--in which case it would have been something which the senator would have asked Javits to do, just to have Gates, or whoever the professor was, to follow him in testimony. Usually they take the members of Congress first or the governor. Normally they take the governor first and then the members of Congress, but since we were there before the governor was there, we were able to go on first, as I recall.

GREENE: What about Commissioner Hollis S. Ingraham of the New York State Public Health Department? Did you have any contact with him?

PIGMAN: He was usually present when the senator was testifying. But I mean he was not helpful in any way. And you know, it wasn't. . . . He is a rather conservative guy. I also don't think he's the real force of Governor Rockefeller's interest in water pollution. He administers the Conservation Department, but I think there are other people on the Governor's immediate staff who handle this sort of activity.

GREENE: How about Muskie? How was he to deal with? Was he helpful?

PIGMAN: Well, I don't know. He's certainly friendly. He was not. . . . He was the senior man and they were his hearings. But he never exhibited anything other than, you know, politeness and cordiality to Senator Kennedy in these things. At this time, in '65, almost anything that Kennedy did got fantastic publicity. And in one sense it helped Muskie in further highlighting the hearings. It was good publicity for the hearings. And since they were Muskie's hearings, he probably welcomed that aspect of it. Of course Muskie held the whip hand on setting up the legislation, so that. . . . There was no problem that I recall.

GREENE: What was the value of holding the hearings on location as opposed to holding them here at the Capitol? Why was that preferred?

PIGMAN: Part of it is usually to see, to visually see, in some cases. In other cases. . . . I forget whether it was at the Lake Erie Conference or the hearings themselves, but there was a trip up the Buffalo River where you could visually see the pollution. The other thing, of course, is to allow local witnesses to appear. They don't have to travel to Washington to pay the expense, and you get a bigger turnout of these people. And the third thing is that by getting away from Washington, sometimes the press and radio and TV give the subject greater coverage than they would if it was one of many hearings going on in Washington. So then they value it, too. And I think primarily it's to allow local witnesses to testify who would not be able to come to Washington otherwise. Anyone was allowed to testify on this. And there were more filed statements. And there were a fairly extensive group of local supporters who would turn out in Buffalo but obviously wouldn't come down to Washington.

GREENE: Did you ever feel that witnesses were franker testifying away from Washington?

PIGMAN: No, I never noticed that.

GREENE: What about the five months that this bill was in conference? What were you doing on it at that point?

PIGMAN: I think I contacted Sullivan a couple of times to find out what was going to happen on the provisions that we were interested in. I think I may have talked to Linton once or so during that period. But that was about the extent of the involvement on that.

GREENE: Were you aware of much industrial pressure at this point, particularly against the federal authority, lobbying interests?

PIGMAN: I don't recall whether it was the '65 bill or the '66 bill that dealt with detergents, but there was a contact from the detergent industry who came into the office and was interested in seeing that the regulations were not too stiff as regards detergents. But that was about the only. . . . Well, we used to get letters after Senator Kennedy would testify at some of these various pollution conferences and talk about specific industries that were polluting the. . . . Sometimes we'd get a letter saying, We've done such and such to improve the situation, and the report of the federal government on this is wrong. We'd like the opportunity to come in and tell you about it--that sort of thing. But in terms of general industrial opposition, no. I mean they didn't exert, or try to exert, their influence in the office. We wouldn't have been the natural people to have done that. They would have been people on the committee.

GREENE: Well, how satisfied were you with the eventual bill? Was it more or less what you expected, or had you hoped for a better one?

PIGMAN: I don't think the. . . . The bill was obviously a compromise. Places like New York City were not going to benefit, were not going to get enough money really to do the job well. But it wasn't too bad. It was a reasonable bill.

GREENE: Was there anything else on it that we should discuss before we go on to something else?

PIGMAN: You know, it's very hard for me now to recall the details of this. No, that's about it, I guess.

GREENE: Okay. How much of a continuing interest did Robert Kennedy, or you on his behalf, have in the pollution issue between the passage of this bill and the introduction of the administration bill the next year?

PIGMAN: Well, we were working on the conferences for Lake Erie and then following the Lake Erie Conference we called for the Hudson River Conference. Then following the Hudson River Conference we worked on the south shore of Long Island conference and asked for that to be held. . . . There was sort of a continuing interest in the subject. Even in the fall of '67 when Senator Kennedy went up the Hudson with his group in New York on the Storm King Mountain issue sponsored by the Scenic Hudson /Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference/, he was again, you know, talking about pollution. It was an issue, very much an issue. It was one of the issues of the day. It tends to be more of a sort of a middle-class and upper income interest than an interest of the poor, but it's there. He had a concern about the environment. So it was continuing. It wasn't the sort of thing where we were so much preparing legislation at the time as we were working on getting the spotlight put on water pollution problems in New York State, so that we could identify the issues and get a reasonable background of technical information, which the federal government would prepare for these conferences, which would then be available.

GREENE: Were these conferences in general sort of the same theory as the hearings, to have them on the spot, and get local people to come out, and get local press attention--the Long Island conference?

PIGMAN: No, they were empowered by the. . . . Under the act they are to be held. And statutorily I think they're to be held somewhere in the area where the pollution problem is. And I think it's a requirement to have witnesses appear. So that again it's necessary to do it locally so people can get there without any cost or effort.

GREENE: Would you also use this as kind of a spur to your legislative interests?

PIGMAN: Well, whenever you talk about the problem you would mention, you talk about the legislation that, one, had been passed, and the legislation you would look to be required for it, and talk about the needs primarily in terms of money and in terms of authority for the federal government to enforce pollution controls.

GREENE: Do you remember when the administration draft bill was submitted in 1966, what the reaction to it was in Congress?

PIGMAN: You're speaking of the water pollution bill now, right?

GREENE: Right. The Federal Water Pollution Act.

PIGMAN: No, I really don't. Generally, I think, the administration bills were weaker than the ones that we wanted. Johnson spoke out in those years strongly on the pollution issue, but they weren't necessarily backed up with money, and weren't necessarily as. . . . They contained few of the provisions dealing specifically with industry or with enforcement, than we would generally want. So that they had to be stiffened and worked on to be made useful.

GREENE: Why do you think that the administration was so weak on this issue, especially since . . .

PIGMAN: I don't think they were weak on the issue considering the fact that they submitted it. They were aware that it was a hot issue, popular issue, and were putting in bills. They deal less with industrial pollution, the question of enforcement primarily because those are unpopular aspects of the program, I suspect. You know, I don't know why. I could guess, but I don't know. In fact, I've never had anyone tell me specifically that that was the reason why they were weak on it. And Johnson, as far as I know, never passed a bill that was unpopular with industry. And in the car safety bill, and in the water pollution bill, and all these bills he didn't aggravate his relationship with the industrial community. It was part of his consensus politics. And it does aggravate industry to have enforcement provisions put in the bills. He didn't have to really, I think, because it would be put in by Congress in all likelihood. Or he may have felt so anyway.

GREENE: What about the writing of S. 2947, which was the '66 bill which Robert Kennedy was cosponsor of? Did you get involved in the writing at all? This was Muskie's bill.

PIGMAN: No, not so. I think there were a couple of provisions that I had talked about with Royce and Linton at the time. But I don't recall. . . . We didn't get involved in the detailed writing of it. We were cosponsoring to indicate our interest in it. And then I think he testified again that year, but I'm not positive on that.

GREENE: Am I correct in thinking that the major issue you would be interested in was raising the ceiling on project funding?

PIGMAN: That was part of it. And part of it was just increasing, getting the maximum amount of authorization possible and making sure that the bill was fully funded once it was passed. I guess my mind is not. . . . You know, I'm not very clear in my mind as to. . . . I don't even recall the provisions of the '66 bill at this stage in time. It was not the more important of the two bills. The most important bill had been passed in '65.

GREENE: Yes. You know, I noticed that Senator Edward Kennedy /Edward M. Kennedy/ testified on the '66 bill and Robert Kennedy didn't. Do you remember any consultations between the staffs at this time on the bill?

PIGMAN: Well, he had an intern that summer. Senator Ted Kennedy had an intern and Dave Burke /David Burke/ or somebody asked me if I would talk to her about it. She came over and I had suggested a number of things that they could do regarding the pollution issue because it could have been a big issue in Massachusetts. But aside from the testimony. . . . And again

it may have just been a natural division of functions that he chose not to make a big push on it in the state. But aside from working with the gal that summer, I don't know that they consulted. . . . They may have talked. But I mean, their opportunities for talking with each other were frequent enough away from the office so I wouldn't necessarily have known.

GREENE: Was it an unstated agreement that you wouldn't work on the same . . .

PIGMAN: No, not an unstated agreement. It was just the way the things worked. We wouldn't pick up his issues. It's true that it wasn't a formal agreement; it was unsaid; we just didn't. We didn't get into issues that he was into, and vice versa. It was a simple arrangement. Other than when you had to stand for the record that you're in favor of the measure, you didn't make a big brouhaha about something that the other senator was involved in. For example, Senator Robert Kennedy did not get into the draft question in detail for the very reason that Senator Ted Kennedy had made this one of his major issues. So that may have accounted for the fact that Senator Ted Kennedy didn't do that much in pollution relatively speaking.

GREENE: How would you follow through on these conferences? Would there be any groups that you'd try to stay in contact with?

PIGMAN: The conferences were reconvened from time to time. For example, I think there was a second session of the Hudson River Conference. And again at this time it was sort of an assessment of what had been done in the meantime. There were groups that showed up for the conference that then would know if Senator Kennedy was interested in being contacted by them. But it was not something so much that we initiated as they initiated it. There was enough going on all the time so that we got involved in a couple of water pollution. . . . We got involved in a beach pollution issue up in Rochester as a result partially of the Buffalo conferences through a friend of Speziack's in Rochester who gave us the information on the subject, And we were involved in that in trying to get the beaches closed, in effect, because of the very polluted condition of the water there in Lake Ontario.

GREENE: In August of '66 Robert Kennedy testified before the House government reorganization committee /Subcommittee on Executive and Legislative Reorganization/ the Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Power at Syracuse. Do you remember that?

PIGMAN: Yes.

GREENE: Was that at Chairman Jones's invitation, or how was that arranged?

PIGMAN: Well, I think we asked to testify at that. I think we heard that there was going to be a conference up there and we asked to testify. And again we were able to do it through Dick Sullivan and they were glad to have us there. It added to the publicity of the hearing. Bob Kennedy liked that particular speech. It got a big play. We banged Johnson /Lyndon B. Johnson/ fairly hard on the failure to appropriate ^{sufficient} funds. And the senator was glad to do this. It was an issue on which he didn't mind separating from the administration. It was a non-Vietnam issue and a chance to do it. And he liked the speech, I recall.

GREENE: Did you write that yourself?

PIGMAN: Yes, I drafted it and he read it. I know the press covered that fairly well because there had not been any hearing in Syracuse to date, and Onondaga was in pretty rough shape from the pollution standpoint. And I think it was welcomed, and that for some reason the timing hit just right. It was a good appearance.

GREENE: When you'd go upstate for things like this, would you also try to work in other stops or just the one stop?

PIGMAN: He would. I did not go up with him to that conference. But he would. Jerry Bruno /Gerald A. Bruno/ was in Syracuse and would plan a variety of contacts. The senator would either visit with or leave a note that he had called for the editors of the papers in town, and would see any number of a variety of groups that had been in contact with Jerry Bruno asking if they could see the senator. When he went upstate he would use these as much as possible for opportunities to talk to the people in those areas. The people upstate regarded Senator Kennedy as their senator. There's sort of a division in New York between the city senator and the upstate senator, although it was strange for a Democrat to be in this position. They did, and he was quite popular in areas upstate, surprisingly so, in communities that were normally quite Republican.

GREENE: Did you get involved at all in Ottinger's amendment giving New York and New Jersey governors veto power over any antipollution plans in the Hudson Valley? There was kind of a fight over that one.

PIGMAN: What you've described sounds familiar, but I'm not. . . . Was this in regard to the Hudson River compact, now?

GREENE: No. In fact, what it was was they were talking about these basin plans and that every basin should have some kind of control act governing it, and that one of the /congressmen/--I can't remember now which congressman it was--felt that there should be a supervisory body over the Hudson River so that no pollution plan could go through without the governor's approval.

PIGMAN: Well, that sounds like one of Governor Rockefeller's deals to keep the governor in power over pollution planning. He sort of conducted a running battle with the administration to retain state control over programs of this type. Ottinger opposed that amendment, didn't he.

GREENE: No, what he wanted was a veto power for the governors of New York and New Jersey. The original plan was to have equal power among the five state governors that were involved, four or five, I think, were involved. And Ottinger said that that was unfair since New York and New Jersey were by far the major states involved.

PIGMAN: We didn't, that I can recall, get involved in that particular fight.

GREENE: Yes. It did go through . . .

PIGMAN: Yes.

GREENE: . . . and they were given the veto power? Well, what did you do while this bill was in conference, anything to do . . .

PIGMAN: No, not really.

GREENE: . . . push for the higher authorization?

PIGMAN: No.

GREENE: The final authorization was about nine hundred and fifty million less than the Senate had provided. Was this a disappointment or had you kind of expected it would be that low?

PIGMAN: As best I can recall, the House figure was lower. We were unhappy with that, but I mean that's the sort of thing that you can't do much about. So that you do the best you can.

GREENE: Anything else on that bill?

PIGMAN: No, not really. And as I say, the '66 bill was the lesser of the two and we were not as heavily involved in that as in the first one.

GREENE: Well, then I had some questions on the water shortage speech and the White House meeting which followed up on it. How did you decide to give this speech and what to include in it?

PIGMAN: Well, there was a crisis in New York City and in the northeast because of the water shortage. The question was, What should be done? I don't recall who I talked with now. Some of the water pollution control people, as a matter of fact, I think again, were very useful in this. I talked with a variety of people and prepared a rather comprehensive comment on what should be done. But it was not necessarily a well-written speech from the standpoint of delivery. But it caused quite a stir in the administration because when the senator gave it on the floor, we understand that immediately after that, President Johnson asked for an executive department review on every aspect of the senator's speech from all his departments just to check the thing out and find out what should be done. And as a result of that, Johnson wound up calling his White House Conference with the mayors who were to come in on the water shortage.

Kennedy was invited, and he asked me to go along. We went down, and Celebrezze was still there. Udall, I think, addressed the conference, and Celebrezze spoke. Johnson came in briefly. But it was sort of a fiasco, and you could see Senator Kennedy getting more and more irritated that. . . . My conclusion was that he. . . . He said at the time, "I think this is just being run in the most incredibly poor way."

The mayor of Newark, who knew Bob was sitting next to him. Newark was fourteen days away from running out of water. And in the meantime the administration was talking about studies and stuff like this. I mean, not

really reacting in a concrete way--you know, talking about. . . . They did finally declare an emergency, but even in terms of the emergency they weren't talking in a very realistic fashion about what had to be done to cope with the emergency. And it was really a tight summer.

They stopped serving water at the tables in New York. They started seizing private lakes in New Jersey and pumping them out to bring water into the system. As a result of that a number of major federal efforts were started to assess water resources in the northeast. But it brought home with a bang just the total shortage of, the long-run shortage that's going to take place in the northeast and the country unless we are more careful with our. . . . Well, not only being more careful, but also unless we make plans to get more water and to use it appropriately.

One of the things that came out of that was that we talked about desalinization; we talked about better usage. There was a question of whether apartments should be metered or not--it was a hot political issue in New York--and whether water should be free. It was a real crisis, and this was the sort of thing that the senator immediately recognized his responsibilities to and took the initiative in urging federal action. In this case the federal government, I think, sort of responded to him rather than having recognized it immediately and begun to do something about it themselves.

GREENE: I know one of the things he said in that speech he was going to do is call for drought aid under the Federal Disaster Act . . .

PIGMAN: Which we did.

GREENE: Yes. And I think that was at least an indirect criticism of Rockefeller for not following the governor of New Jersey in having done that before.

PIGMAN: Well, he had not done so yet because it requires the state to put up funds. We called for opening up grazing lands that belong to the federal government and the state and stuff like that. These were all a number of steps that we requested, and they weren't necessarily things that the senator could do on his own authority. But by saying that they should be done, it put either Rockefeller or the federal government in a position of pretty well having to do it because if they didn't they could be criticized for it.

GREENE: Did they finally follow through on that?

PIGMAN: Yes. It was declared a disaster area. There were a combination of loans and all the provisions under the disaster act that were made available.

GREENE: I remember in following the senator's speech, Senator Javits took the floor and in a half-hearted way complimented the senator on his proposal. But he also criticized him indirectly for indicating that maybe this was the first thing that was being done on this--almost taking it as a personal critique of his own efforts. Do you remember anything about that?

PIGMAN: Javits is always given to standing up after somebody else makes a speech and either aligning himself with it or making some comments on that. And I don't think Senator Kennedy was particularly bothered by that. Every politician was very sensitive to the water problem. Some of the smaller cities, in a tougher position than New York City was, had run out of water. There were actually places that summer where drinking water was bottled and sold upstate. And this sort of thing is very damaging. It's sort of a breakdown of the basic services in the community.

That was a very--not caustic speech--but it was a tough speech in the sense that he indicated that what we needed was massive action on the problem, and it just hadn't begun to really be addressed by the federal government. Of course, traditionally the governors are supposed to ask for help and then the federal government responds under the Federal Emergency Act, the official law governing this thing. But I don't think Bob ever felt that these were restraints on taking action. He felt that there was always something you could do if you had to and if it needed to be done. I think he felt that the federal government had fallen down, at least at the executive level in dealing with the problem.

GREENE: Did you have any direct contact with the Department of Agriculture about getting the grain released for them?

PIGMAN: Oh, about the grazing area, yes, that's right, and lower-priced grain. Yes, sure.

GREENE: How helpful were they over there?

PIGMAN: Well, they were pretty cooperative. I mean he had a good relationship with--who was it?--Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] at the time. There was no problem in getting that. I mean, the state obviously qualified for it, so that we were able to get it done. At that time there were large surpluses in the federal granary, so there was no problem in getting it.

GREENE: What about Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] of Interior and Insular Affairs [Senate Committee of Interior and Insular]? Was he helpful at all? He indicated after Senator Kennedy's testimony that he planned to take action on this.

PIGMAN: Are you speaking about the speech now? Is that it?

GREENE: Yes. Following the speech.

PIGMAN: Yes. Well, I think one of the things that we had spoken about was the fact that the western senators had long been involved in water problems and the easterners had voted to help them deal with this, and now we were looking to them for help. And Jackson was very responsive on that. You know, we voted these tremendous sums for the Bureau of Reclamation and they couldn't very well ask for those sums without in turn helping the east when they needed it. But we gave a plug for the fact that the west had been a lot more sensible about its developmental water than the east had been, and that Jackson was responsive at the time. Now how that followed in. . . . Well, in fact, some of the studies we used of water in the northeast were then approved by the Interior Committee [Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs]. So that's a reflection of that.

GREENE: One last question. I know in his speech Senator Kennedy mentioned his interest in Senator Aiken's /George D. Aiken/ bill offering grants and loan assistance to rural communities to help them build pipelines and reservoirs. Do you remember that?

PIGMAN: Yes, that's right.

GREENE: How much did you actually do on that? I know he was a cosponsor, but. . . .

PIGMAN: We talked to Aiken at quite some length as to what it would do, and it turned that it would be quite useful for the small communities in the state. And so here was a Republican pushing a bill on the Democratic administration. So actually we were of more help to him than he was to us in one sense, in the fact that if he could get a prominent Democrat sponsoring it, it had a better chance than it would if it were strictly a Republican bill. It never would have gotten anywhere in a Democratic Congress--or probably would not, I should say.

GREENE: Is there anything else on this issue of water shortage?

PIGMAN: I have to go to work.

GREENE: Okay.