

**Andrew Biemiller, Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 3/11/1965**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Andrew Biemiller  
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**Biographical Note**

Biemiller, a Representative from Wisconsin from 1945 to 1949 and Director of the AFL-CIO's Department of Legislation, from 1956 to 1982, discusses John F. Kennedy's record on labor legislation as a senator and labor union sentiment during the 1960 presidential primaries, among other issues.

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Andrew Biemiller—JFK#1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Andrew Biemiller

March 11, 1965  
Washington, D.C.

By Howard Gamser

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GAMSER: Andy, perhaps we'd better start by asking you just when and where you became acquainted with the late President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BIEMILLER: My first acquaintanceship with Jack Kennedy came during the Eighty-first Congress when he was serving his second term and I was coming back after having served in the Seventy-ninth Congress. I had never known Jack Kennedy before that time. I must admit that on first meeting him I had certain mixed emotions, because he had been in Milwaukee with a special subcommittee of the House Labor Committee in late 1947, accompanying the then incumbent Charles Kersten [Charles Joseph Kersten] who held the fifth Wisconsin seat, which I took away from Charles Kersten in 1948, he having beaten me in '46. Jack Kennedy had said some rather kind words about then Congressman Kersten so I had mixed feelings. However, I found him a very warmhearted individual and we soon began to associate together and discuss many pieces of legislation.

He at that time was serving on the House Labor Committee. He was not regarded as one of the leaders on the committee, which was only natural, being in his second term, but he was always knowledgeable; he knew what was going on in that committee. And following the usual sort of thing that members of the House have to do, I would frequently go to Jack and discuss what was happening in that committee with him and get a fill-in on bills.

I think one of the interesting things in the light of his later history is that during that Congress there was a very good federal-aid-to-education bill, came over from the Senate. It was defeated by the House Labor Committee by a vote of 13 to 12, with Jack Kennedy being one of those who voted to kill a federal-aid-to-education bill at that time.

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GAMSER: Well, subsequent to that, did you have a direct connection and association with him when you entered the Congress?

BIEMILLER: Well, I don't pick up really again with Jack Kennedy until 1953 when I went to work for George Meany as a legislative representative of the old AF of L [American Federation of Labor]. By that time Jack Kennedy was a senator from Massachusetts. He was serving on the Labor Committee, and obviously I would start making contacts with him. He was sponsoring, even at that early time, legislation of great importance to the labor movement. For example, he was one of the first people to openly fight hard for a bill to create federal standards for unemployment compensation. Unfortunately, this bill hasn't yet passed. But it is one of the great goals of the AF of L-CIO [Congress of Industrial Organization], and hence we felt greatly indebted to Jack Kennedy for his sponsorship of that legislation. It was also during about 1954 that he made what became a famous speech in the labor movement to a convention of the Massachusetts AF of L in which he set forth a rather far-reaching program. It received a great deal of attention. I discussed that speech with him in advance and was very pleased when I found out that he was touching on problems of the revision of the Taft-Hartley Law, his unemployment compensation bill, revision of the immigration law; some effort to stop the pirating of plants to the southland, and matters of that nature that were of great concern to the labor movement.

He likewise in 1954 first began to get a good deal of attention from our people because he fought against the appointment of one of Eisenhower's [Dwight D. Eisenhower] appointments to the National Labor Relations Board, a gentleman by the name of Albert M. Beeson. This became a classic case because it developed that Beeson had not told the whole truth to the Senate Labor Committee. He had hidden, for example, the fact that he was still retaining pension rights with the corporation for which he had been working. He was confirmed after a very tough fight by a quite narrow margin—two votes, as I recall it. But in the course of that fight, Jack Kennedy was one of those who brought out the facts on this case. And the Eisenhower administration didn't even try to appoint him when the year and half term to which he'd been appointed ran out.

From then on it was pretty obvious that we had a real champion in the Senate. Bill after bill would come up in which Jack Kennedy played very important role. Take, for example, one of the issues which the AF of L-CIO fought for a long time—a bill known as the Trade Adjustment Act. This was an attempt to create some kind of reimbursement for workers and for industries that were adversely affected by trade policies of the United States—policies which would be in the interests of the country as a whole but would have an

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adverse affect on a group of workers or a couple of employers in some area or some industry. We had to fight for that bill for a long time. And, in fact, it finally became law [Trade Expansion Act of 1962] after Jack Kennedy became president in 1962. I cite it as an example of the kind of thing he was doing that did interest our people during the early part of his career as a United States senator.

GAMSER:               Where did you have him on your checklist? That is, where did the department of legislation rank the then Senator Kennedy among the members of the Senate when you had to evaluate their reactions and their votes on legislation of interest to the labor movement that would come before the Senate?

BIEMILLER:           We always considered him as a senator from whom we expected and would get very full cooperation. I don't mean by that to infer that he was a rubber stamp senator any more than I would infer that any senator is a rubber stamp. But I mean that he was always perfectly willing to sit down, to discuss issues at great length when necessary. He always would have his staff people available for consultation and working out the details of legislation. And we found that in general our approach to legislative matters would be simpatico. The real issues, of course, started to pile up in 1958 and in 1959. And I think it well to explain a few things that happened then, because there's been some misunderstanding over some of those issues.

In 1958 there were two pieces of legislation of great importance with which Jack Kennedy's name was associated. The first was the Douglas-Kennedy-Ives [Paul H. Douglas; Irving McNeil Ives] bill which was a bill designed to bring some kind of very badly needed regulation on the administration of health and welfare plans. This bill had the full endorsement of the AF of L-CIO from the beginning. There had been some very bad cases of corruption, malfeasance in the administration of these plans, sometimes involving employers as well as union leaders. And right from the beginning, the AF of L-CIO took the position that we wanted to get these plans out in a goldfish bowl. I remember President Meany using that phrase over and over again. And we concurred heartily with Senators Douglas, Kennedy, and Ives on this bill. It passed the Senate in very good form. Unfortunately, it got watered down a little bit in the House of Representatives. And again it wasn't until Jack Kennedy became President that we finally made some needed changes in that legislation. We think it has had a good effect on protecting the funds of the workers and made sure that they would get their pensions and not have those funds disappear through corruption.

GAMSER:               You're talking now specifically about the Pension and Welfare Disclosure Act?

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BIEMILLER:           Precisely. This is the bill that started as the Douglas-Kennedy-Ives bill. Now in that same year of 1958 when the Health and Welfare Fund

Disclosure Act first passed the Congress, there was a Kennedy-Ives bill which was the forerunner of the bill that later became Landrum-Griffin [Philip Mitchell Landrum; Robert P. Griffin]. Now, in 1958 it was perfectly apparent as a result of the disclosures of the McClellan committee [John L. McClellan], disclosures of corruption in high places in unions like the Teamsters Union, that there was going to be some protective legislation for union funds and for union members, and to stop the kind of thing that Dave Beck [David Beck] and other officials of the Teamsters union had been getting away with for years. The AF of L-CIO, contrary to the opinion that some people have, hailed this attempt to set up reasonable regulations on the administration of union funds, and on other problems of unions, particularly the question of corrupt elections.

GAMSER: Andy, could I just interrupt you there for a moment? Is this a matter of evaluation by hindsight? Since you had such a direct connection with the enunciation of the AF or L-CIO position in this matter, in retrospect, would you say that there was hailing of it unanimously by the labor movement? Or did you have some members who felt no additional remedial legislation or corrective legislation of this nature was necessary and sort of frowned on this initial attempt of Kennedy-Ives to introduce such a bill?

BIEMILLER: Oh, yes, you are right. At the beginning, there were a great many people who looked upon the bill with misgivings. There was one rather dramatic thing happened one day during a hearing on this piece of legislation. President Meany was testifying and had objected to certain parts of the bill. And Senator Kennedy said, in effect, that many of the friends of labor had advocated this part of the bill, whereupon President Meany said quite loudly, "God save us from our friends." This remark was interpreted by some people as directed at Senator Kennedy himself. And I remember having to write a long letter of explanation to the Massachusetts State AF of L-CIO pointing out that by no means were we attacking Senator Kennedy, that we had in mind certain people who had been active in drafting the bill and whom we thought did not fully understand the problems of the labor movement.

Now, actually the Kennedy-Ives bill was rewritten in some parts. And the AF of L-CIO then stated it was perfectly willing to accept any honest regulation of union funds, in particular, where we were fearful that there could be a repetition of what Dave Beck had done in the Teamsters union

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and other cases that had been brought out by the McClellan committee. And when the Kennedy-Ives bill passed the Senate, it was a bill that was passed with the support of the AF of L-CIO.

That bill was killed in the House. It was fought by many people, including the National Association of Manufacturers, which I think has sometimes been forgotten. This meant that there was no legislation in 1958 as a result of the McClellan committee investigation. Now, when the year 1959 rolled around, then it was perfectly obvious that the pressure was still on.



GAMSER: But before we get to the second attempt at a Kennedy-Ives, or a bill of similar nature, you made reference just a few moments ago to the initial draft of the bill, or the original draft, and some of the people who may have advised then Senator Kennedy as to necessary provisions or certain language to which the labor movement took exception, or which they felt was unnecessarily harsh or just unnecessary as a restrictive measure. Could you expand on that a little more? Do you recall some of your objections to the original legislation?

BIEMILLER: I honestly can't at the moment recall the entire controversy that went on. But we felt in the early drafts there was just an over intervention on the part of government. And in the redrafting of the legislation the governmental intervention was brought down to a minimum. I think that it was upon this question that these feelings developed one way and another.

GAMSER: Do you remember, or could you identify, some of the people you felt were influential in devising the original draft? Were they Boston sources of expertise in this field, or Washington people working in the Kennedy office, or did this information come from private lawyers or from the solicitor's office in the Department of Labor, or where do you think the original restrictions came from?

BIEMILLER: I remember we weren't too happy about the role that Archie Cox [Archibald Cox] played in the legislation at that time—nor the role that he played a year later, I might add, but we'll come to that. We were also certain that a couple of Yale professors had had a finger in this piece of legislation. And our objection to them was not that we felt, just as Meany said, "God save us from our friends"—they were anti-labor—but that they simply didn't understand how the labor movement ran.

For instance, I recall that there was an attempt to involve the smallest kind of local unions in all kinds of reporting, which in our opinion just is a foolish thing to

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do and which, you'll remember, even Landrum-Griffin finally gave us an out on the issues. But the original draft would have had the little, small, local unions of twenty or thirty people having to make the whole long series of government reports that a large union has to, which can be done by an office staff, et cetera. But I think it was mainly just on this question that there was an over intervention in that earlier legislation which disappeared from the later legislation.

GAMSER: You were saying about '59 when another serious effort was made.

BIEMILLER: Well, that started early in 1959. It started as the Kennedy-Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.] bill, and it was a bill that we went over very carefully and

that we felt on the whole was a good bill. In fact, I personally testified in late January of that year for the AF of L-CIO, raising some objections, but basically saying that this bill is what we want, and pointing out that probably never before in the history of the world had an organization come in and said, “We want some government regulation. We need it. We can’t control certain problems that exist here, particularly this problem of corruption,” which had been highlighted by the McClellan hearings. Now, as that bill went along, however, all kinds of problems happened.

I remember early in the year on a very nice spring day in April of 1959, Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] and I sat down at a luncheon table with Senators McGee [Gale William McGee], Dodd [Thomas J. Dodd], and Muskie [Edmund S. Muskie], all of whom were freshmen senators at that time. We discussed at some length with them this legislation. One of the senators then raised the question, “What about amendments to this legislation?” And we replied, “Well, we think the only sensible thing you can do is, you’ll have to follow Jack Kennedy. When a bill hits the floor and amendments come flying in from all parts of the Senate, someone has to be in charge that you can respect and trust. This is Senator Kennedy’s legislation, and we think if you go along with the Senator, you’ll be all right.”

Well, now, the Senator did a masterful job of handling that bill. He did succeed in repelling many very bad amendments. But on the twenty-first of April the real blow hit us. And this is a day that we still not long forget. This was the day that the famous McClellan Amendment was adopted. This amendment set up a so-called bill of rights for individual union members, on the theory that individual union members were being sorely oppressed by labor leadership. Actually, it was so badly drafted that even after it passed it had to be rewritten. And we succeeded in pulling some of the teeth of the McClellan Amendment in the rewriting and an adoption of a later amendment proposed by a bipartisan group of senators including Senators Clark [Joseph S. Clark], Church [Frank Church], and Kuchel [Thomas H. Kuchel]—all done with Senator Kennedy’s collaboration, naturally. Now, that amendment was carried by one vote.

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Unfortunately, two of the closest friends the labor movement had were away when that vote was taken. Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] was out in Oregon campaigning for the presidency. And I remember that the then leader of the Senate, Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson], two days before this had asked George Meany and myself to speak to Senator Humphrey to see if we couldn’t keep him here. We happened to run into the senator just as we left Senator Johnson’s office and raised the issue with him. But he stated he had made this appointment to address the Oregon legislature, and he felt he couldn’t break it. And I remember George Meany saying, “Well, it looks like the labor movement will have to depend on just Jack Kennedy to carry our fight in the Senate.” Senator Humphrey’s face turned a little white on that remark, I might add, too. The blood drained out of it pretty fast. Senator Douglas was up in Canada negotiating with the Canadian government about water levels on the Great Lakes, which is a matter of great concern to the city of Chicago.

We lost that amendment. We lost it in the sense that it was carried by one vote. Also, I regret to say Senator Dodd broke the promise he had made to Arthur Goldberg and myself,

and voted for that amendment. I repeat that we were successful in getting that amendment rewritten in part and somewhat toned down. It would have made it almost impossible for local unions to conduct business; any troublemaker could have just demanded the floor; you'd have had no way of silencing him. And in general we certainly didn't care for that amendment.

I might add there was also one parliamentary situation where a tie vote occurred. The tie vote would have been in our favor except that the then Vice President, Richard Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon], was in the chair and he voted against us. This became one of the great issues in the 1960 campaign for the presidency as far as the labor movement was concerned. As you will recall, that bill then went on over to the House. And there we got into even more difficulty and more trouble.

For a long time that bill hung around in the House and finally got reported out in a somewhat different form. And then it was reported out actually under the authorship of Carl Elliot [Carl A. Elliot], then a congressman from Alabama. But a combination team of Phil Landrum, a southern Democrat from Georgia, and Griffin from Michigan came in with their proposal which embodied all the worst features of the McClellan bill of rights, and then added some other bad features of its own. And after a long, long fight, which has nothing to do with the immediate situation except its outcome, Landrum-Griffin passed the House by a vote of 229-201. This meant, of course, that these two bills were in conference and that out of the Kennedy-Ervin bill that had passed the Senate and the Landrum-Griffin bill that had passed the House, there was going to be a piece of legislation that would become law.

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There were some people in the labor movement who, not understanding the way in which the Congress operates, thought we could just obviously kill this situation by not having anything come out of conference. But there were people in both the Senate and the House who felt strongly there had to be a bill. So our job was then to work with Jack Kennedy in that conference committee and with some of the people from the House, like Frank Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.], who were serving on the conference committee, to try to bring the best possible bill that we could out of the conference committee.

I want to say that I think Jack Kennedy did one of the greatest jobs I've ever seen anybody do in conference. He was able to pull the teeth of some of the worst features of the House bill. He was able to work a near miracle. And, actually, the garment trades came out of the situation better than they had gone in.

There was a good rider put in that met the peculiar problems of the garment trade which even Senator Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] accepted Jack Kennedy's logic on. On the other hand, there was another bit that would have been in the bill except that it was blocked by Graham Barden [Graham A. Barden], then chairman of the House committee, a proposal to solve what is commonly known in labor circles as the situs-picketing situation. This was a decision of the Supreme Court that declared that building trade unions could not picket a subcontractor on a building site where there was a general contractor who had an agreement with the union. This matter could have been solved also. And Jack Kennedy was ready to solve it. But I repeat, Graham Barden managed to get a ruling out of the House

Parliamentarian that would have made a point of order against this part of the conference report hold, and so it had to be dropped.

Jack Kennedy went to work at that time and got the agreement of the leaders of both houses that they would take up this matter at a later date and straighten it out. Unfortunately, an internal dispute in the labor movement to this day has stopped the passage of this legislation. But we've just worked that internal dispute out, and I'm hopeful that at long last we will take the Jack Kennedy proposal of 1959 and make it law separately.

Now, a nasty situation developed during this time. A section of the labor movement blamed Jack Kennedy for any kind of legislation at all. And the machinist paper began to refer to the bill as the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin bill. Senator Morse [Wayne L. Morse] made a very mean speech about the final conference bill, which was recorded and paid for, as far as we have ever been able to find out, by the Teamsters union and used pretty widely throughout the country in attacking Jack Kennedy and in attacking senators who voted for the conference report. The AF of L-CIO attitude on the conference was that, while we would not endorse it—because still the bill carried many things we did not like—we would not fight it. And if anyone asked us how they should vote.

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we would say, "You are on your own. But, as far as we are concerned, we are not fighting the conference report." We couldn't very well ask Jack Kennedy to do the best he could in conference, and then come out and fight his conference report. And I think, by and large, he came out of that very nasty mess—and there was no question it was a nasty mess in more ways than one—with the understanding of most labor leaders that it was not Jack Kennedy's fault that we'd gotten a bad piece of labor legislation.

We have always been strongly of the opinion that what really made the bad piece of legislation possible were two speeches that were made on television, one by President Eisenhower—and off hand I can't recall a single case of where the president of the United States preempted the television time of all the networks to make a speech for one particular piece of legislation, in this instance it being a substitute amendment for a bill that had been duly reported by a committee of the Congress.

The other television speech, which was not necessarily intended to cause trouble, was one made by Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], who was the chief investigator for the McClellan committee and who appeared on the Jack Paar [Jack Howard Paar] program and harangued at great length about the need for legislation to curb racketeering in unions.

While he did not specifically mention the Landrum-Griffin bill, which passed the House a few days afterwards, a lot of people thought he was referring to the Landrum-Griffin bill. Both the Eisenhower and the Robert Kennedy speech did bring a flood of mail, almost without parallel, to the Congress of the United States. So that these two TV speeches are the things that most labor leaders felt were responsible for the bad legislation that came out that year.

GAMSER: As chairman of the Senate conference committee, with whom did the late President Kennedy work in conference on final passage?

BIEMILLER: Well, as far as the labor movement...

GAMSER: Was Senator Morse on the conference committee?

BIEMILLER: No, Senator Morse was not on that conference committee. Or, to the best of my recollection at least, he was not. He worked very closely with people who were knowledgeable in the area. Many labor lawyers conferred with him. I was in constant touch with him. Richard Gray [Richard J. Gray], then president of the Building Trades, was in constant touch. And by now, I think his own close legal aide, Archie Cox, recognized the validity of our position. You remember in my earlier remarks I pointed out we didn't consider him necessarily anti-labor;

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we felt at that time he just didn't understand our problems. We think by now he had begun to understand our problems pretty well. And I can simply say that we got the maximum cooperation out of Jack Kennedy.

I remember one day, for example, when we were discussing the possibility of putting the situs-picketing amendment in and it looked like it wasn't possible to do it, he and Dick Gray, head of the Building Trades, and myself got President Meany, who was making a speech out in California, on the phone. And he discussed the matter very frankly with President Meany and told him what his plans were. So I say, obviously, the AF of L-CIO was not going to fight that conference report because here was a man who had done his best to remedy what had become a bad situation for reasons beyond his control.

GAMSER: Who led the House forces for the adoption of most of the Landrum-Griffin provisions?

BIEMILLER: Well, it was Landrum and Griffin themselves who were mixed up in it. But then on top of it you had the inevitable coalition working of the great majority of the Republicans, led by Charlie Halleck [Charles A. Halleck], and of the southern Democrats, led by Howard Smith [Howard W. Smith]. And we were running right smack into that combination, which was always a difficult combination to defeat when it was really working, plus the hysteria that had been worked up first by the McClellan committee hearings themselves, and then by the TV speeches of President Eisenhower and Robert Kennedy, as counsel for the McClellan committee.

The feeling in those days, frankly, wasn't very good between Bobby Kennedy and most of the labor movement. There had been some passages earlier that our people had been resentful of some of the activities there. So that we just had to rely on Jack Kennedy. And thank God he was there, or we would have had a much worse bill. The bill that passed the House was a far worse bill than the bill that came out of the conference committee. The Building Trades also, for example, in the bill that came out of the conference did succeed in getting a much easier approach to the union shop in the building trades where a man only has to be employed 7 days before he joins the union as compared to 30 days in ordinary industry.

And it was recognized as a peculiar problem of the building trades. Hence, as I say, when you had this sort of thing in the conference report, we weren't going to fight it.

GAMSER: Was Mr. Barden then, as chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, the House conference chairman, or did he leave it to Landrum and Griffin to handle the conference?

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BIEMILLER: No. Barden was the House conference chairman, but as a practical matter he left it up to Landrum and Griffin to handle it. The main role he played was the issue that I mentioned a moment ago of killing the chance of putting the situs-picketing amendment into the conference report.

GAMSER: What was the final vote on passage in the House and Senate on the conference report?

BIEMILLER: In the Senate it was overwhelming, 93-2, and Morse and Langer [William Langer] were the only two votes cast against it. As I recall, in the House there were only about fifty-five or fifty-six votes against it, most of them coming from big city congressman who just felt that it was bad legislation for the labor movement and they weren't going to go down the line with it.

For example I remember Charlie Buckley [Charles A. Buckley], who was then the head of the New York City delegation, calling me and saying, "What do you want us to do on the conference report?" And I gave him the honest, standard answer that I mentioned earlier. I said, "We are taking no position on the conference report." He said, "Well, do you think my boys would get in bad with the labor conference report?" I said, "Of course not, Charlie. That's a vote that our people would thoroughly understand. But I want you to understand we're not urging such a vote be cast because of the fine work that was done in the conference committee by Jack Kennedy and by a couple of people from your House, like Frank Thompson."

Now, there was some talk, as I mentioned, that this whole matter on the bill that became Landrum-Griffin—and which some union people insisted on calling Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin—was going to hurt Jack Kennedy in his bid for the presidency. As it turned out, of course, this wasn't the case at all, because what happened was that Jack Kennedy was so active in so many fields and had, in effect, an honorable record on this particular bill as far as he personally was concerned that labor movement recognized that here was a man who was the fighting their battles.

For example, in 1960 there was another great fight that went on, a fight to improve the minimum wage law, reforms that were long overdue—both an increase in the minimum wage and an extension of coverage. A rather poor bill passed the House of Representatives—a bill so bad that we in the labor movement just simply couldn't take it. It was a very, very poor bill indeed, made little improvement, and in fact was retrogressive in some features. Jack Kennedy got out of the Senate an excellent bill—a bill that did increase the minimum wage to \$1.25, that did extend coverage in several directions and so forth. After the

Democratic convention at which Jack Kennedy was nominated, that bill went to conference. And in the conference committee, Graham Barden, heading the House conferees, was adamant that he would take *nothing* but the House bill. I remember that various people pleaded with

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Barden, including some of his own immediate staff, to recognize that in any conference some compromises are made.

Arthur Goldberg and I were cochairmen at the time of a committee that was coordinating the activities of the various AF of L-CIO unions. And I remember vividly sitting in the then temporary office of Jack Kennedy in the capitol, part of which is now the majority leader's office and is known as the 'Kennedy Room'—it has been so designated in honor of Jack Kennedy.

Arthur Goldberg and I sat there for seven hours waiting for Jack Kennedy to come back from the conference. He came back and said, "It's just hopeless. We can't get anything but the House bill. What do you advise?" And we said, "Our advice is just forget the bill. Just let it die. We'll take a chance on the election turning out right, and pass a good bill early in 1961 when you are President." And he said, "I'm inclined to agree with you. I think this is what we'll do. We'll just kill the conference, kill this bill." So it was done. And in 1961, one of the early, fine pieces of legislation that passed in the Kennedy administration was a good, sound bill in the field of minimum wages.

GAMSER: That certainly was risky business, though, turning down even minimal changes in the law in the hope that first, the election would turn out right, and secondly, you'd have a Congress in which you could pass a better bill.

BIEMILLER: Granted, but it was one of those gambles that we had to take. But I cite it as one of the very vivid recollections I have of Jack Kennedy and the role he played in very important legislation to the labor movement. You know, actually by the time the Democratic convention took place, there wasn't any question where most, if not ninety-five percent, of the labor leaders' hearts were. They were with Jack Kennedy in that contest at that time. There were one or two in the Symington [Stuart Symington, II] camp, and one or two in the Johnson camp, but everybody else was in Jack Kennedy's camp.

I remember that the weekend before the convention opened, George Meany, Al Zack [Albert J. Zack], the public relations director of AF of L-CIO, and I made the rounds of the Symington headquarters, the Kennedy headquarters, and the Johnson headquarters in which we were presenting to the candidates the remarks which George Meany had made two or three days earlier at the platform committee of the Democratic convention. One of the memories that will live with me as long as I live was the self-assurance around the Kennedy headquarters at that time. We walked in. People knew who we were. We were expected at the time we arrived. There was no confusion. In fact, if anything, it looked as if it were a little over-organized. But there was certainly no confusion of any sort.

We went in; we sat down with then-Senator Kennedy, candidate. He was somewhat familiar with the testimony that President Meany had given. He looked at certain pages that George Meany called his attention to, and he said, "Why, you know that there's nothing in here that I can't agree with. When I am president, why, we will put these matters into law." He was a man acting not as a candidate for the presidency, but as a man who was already thinking that he had the nomination and was ready to go.

As it turned out, of course, that confidence was very justified. The Kennedy forces pretty well had their votes corralled, and by the time they got around to the voting, I have a vivid recollection of Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] coming up to President Meany and myself in the gallery and saying, "Maybe you fellows would like to see a preliminary scorecard." This was before the balloting opened on the first ballot, maybe ten minutes before the balloting started. And that scorecard was within four votes of the votes that Jack Kennedy got on the first ballot. It was one of the best organized and smoothly done operations I've ever seen.

Now this, of course, was typical of Jack Kennedy's operation in the Senate, both in terms of legislation in general and specifically in his role as chairman of the labor subcommittee on the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. He always had around him excellent staff, people that you could work with, people who were willing to listen, and people who wanted consideration.

I also want to say a tremendous word for his personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], who I think is one of the finest secretaries any man was ever blessed with in the United States. Evelyn was particularly courteous. On those days, for example, that you had, let us say, a two-thirty appointment with the Senator and he started running behind time, she would call you and say "Now, I'm afraid he's about an hour behind. You hadn't better come up until three-thirty." There weren't many secretaries who would do this sort of thing. At the same time it created very good feeling towards the principal as well as the secretary, I might add, when that sort of thing happened, because I'm sure you know from your own experience how you can lose time and waste time waiting for people, through no fault of their own, on Capitol Hill.

GAMSER: Well, Andy, before you move ahead here, I'd like you to back up for a minute, if you will, because you went through and talked very briefly about various components of the labor movement and their pre-election sympathies. You said some of them were in the Symington camp, some were perhaps in the Johnson camp, but you felt that predominantly there was a great deal of backing for candidate

Kennedy from the labor movement even prior. Do you want to say anything? Because I know you took a great interest even though the labor movement doesn't normally participate very heavily in primaries, I know you people watched the primary contest, the very exciting part



of our history, quite closely and watched labor's participation in certain areas in the primary—in West Virginia and in Oregon and in other places where there were close races. And you didn't mention any labor movement Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] support or labor movement Humphrey support, which was there in certain parts of the country and among some of the labor leaders.

BIEMILLER: There wasn't a great deal of labor movement Stevenson support. That had disintegrated, not because the labor movement didn't like Stevenson as a person, but because we just felt Stevenson was a very poor candidate, that he'd made two bad runs and that there was no use backing a dead horse. It was that blunt.

Now, as far as Hubert Humphrey was concerned, he did have backing. He had backing in the Wisconsin primary from some sections of the labor movement. And I think it was the strong showing that Jack Kennedy made in that Wisconsin primary that began to crystallize support for Jack Kennedy. The AF of L-CIO, as you correctly stated, kept its hands officially off of the primaries, but that didn't keep some of our national unions from getting into primaries.

Then by the time the West Virginia primary took place, I'm afraid that Senator Humphrey's support had dwindled down rather rapidly. There was a feeling in the labor movement that Jack Kennedy had proven in Wisconsin that he could get votes, that the Catholic bugaboo had in part disappeared in Wisconsin. For example, he carried the city of Racine, which is the second largest Danish city in the world—there are more Danes in Racine than in any city except Copenhagen—by quite a substantial vote. And this was really something to watch, because the leader of the auto workers in Wisconsin was openly in the Humphrey camp. Racine is largely an auto workers town plus the fact that it's a Lutheran town, as most Danes are, and yet Jack Kennedy carried the city of Racine over Hubert Humphrey. That made the boys just sit down and start thinking practically—many labor leaders.

Dave McDonald [David J. McDonald] of Steel [United Steelworkers of America]—had always been in the Kennedy camp, and he was strong for Jack Kennedy. And his people were working pretty strongly for Kennedy, both in Wisconsin and then later in West Virginia. And when Kennedy swept through West Virginia and Hubert withdrew, then I don't think there was much doubt left in the majority of labor leaders minds as to whom they were going to support. And I think this was where the story was told.

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Now, Symington had support from Jim Carey [James Barron Carey], who was an old personal friend and who had had some dealings with Symington during the war days when Symington was an active manufacturer in St. Louis. And the IEW [IUE, International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers], which Jim Carey headed, had always been on good terms with Symington, and so they were going along with him. There were some local people who were for Symington in various spots.

The only national labor leader that I can recall who was out openly for Lyndon Johnson was Bill Doherty [William C. Doherty], the head of the letter carriers. Again, there

were some small pockets of Johnson support, and I don't mean in the South—I'm talking about other parts of the country. But as a practical matter, by the time that the Democratic convention took place, the overwhelming support of the labor movement was behind Jack Kennedy.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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