

**Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 12/06/1967**  
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**Biographical Note**

O'Neill, United States Congressman, Massachusetts, 1963 – 1986, Speaker of the House, 1977 – 1986, discusses his work for the Democratic Party, Massachusetts politics, among other issues.

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Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. – JFK#2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

THOMAS P. O'NEILL, JR.

December 6, 1967  
Washington, D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't I just ask a general question as to how you got involved in this fight and what was your understanding as to why the thing came up? In other words, what was Kennedy's real opposition, what was his opposition to Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.]?

O'NEILL: Are you asking me that question now?

STEWART: Yes.

O'NEILL: Well, the opposition to Burke was a deep-seated opposition of a personal nature. Burke had been the Democratic Chairman during the days of Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt], and he was known to be a strong Roosevelt and a strong

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Curley [James Michael Curley] man. He always resented Jack Kennedy as a young upstart. He was the type of fellow that went along thoroughly with the leadership, meaning Burke, and he resented Kennedy coming into national prominence when he came down here in Washington. As Chairman of the Committee, Burke was a pretty powerful fellow here in Washington, and when he spoke up he normally figured that people would listen to him and

pay attention to him, but Kennedy paid no attention to him whatsoever. And so it was of a personal nature more than anything else.

And then time went on and John Carr, Jr. [John C. Carr, Jr.] became the Chairman of the State Committee. And John Carr resigned, and they had an interim chairman, and Burke became the interim chairman. So he's now—after having an absence of probably twelve or fourteen years—he's coming back as the chairman again. This is in early 1956.

STEWART: They had a big court battle, didn't they?

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O'NEILL: Yes, they had a court battle to decide whether or not Burke had the authority. I believe that they lost, that Burke lost the title, and technically he wasn't correctly elected. And now we come into the time when we're going to have a candidate for the election as chairman, and this is probably March or April of 1956. They were going to have an election for the chairmanship of the State Committee, and I can recall it was Easter week because we were home on vacation. And Paul Dever [Paul A. Dever]—who had formally been the Governor of the Commonwealth and I was Speaker of the House when he was Governor—and it had always been conceded that I was more or less of a protégé of his—he called me on the telephone and said that he had talked with Jack Kennedy and both he and Jack Kennedy wanted me to be the temporary chairman to fill out the rest of the term until 1957, until the pre-primary elections had taken place and the new delegates and the new state committeemen and women throughout the state had been elected.

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And I asked Dever, why he had decided on me. He said, well, knowing that John McCormack [John William McCormack], who was then the Majority floor leader, was so friendly with me, that he figured that, where he had been supporting Burke, that I could be a good compromise candidate, and Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] and Dever and he felt certainly that he could talk McCormack into it. Well, I said, if he could talk McCormack into it and all parties concerned agreed that I would be the candidate for the State Committee Chairman to fill out the remainder of the year, that I wouldn't run for the job in the following year, that I would take it.

STEWART: Who, if I may interrupt for a second, who else would have had a say in this? You said "all parties."

O'NEILL: Well, the "all parties" were three factions: there was the Dever faction, the McCormack faction, and the Kennedy faction. The following day Jack Kennedy, the Senator, called me from Palm Beach and said

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he had been talking with Dever and would I take the State Committee chairmanship, and which I agreed to do.

Then on the following Monday, I came back to Washington. I got back here in Washington, and I had a telephone call that Majority Leader McCormack wanted to see me over in his office. And I went over to see him. He told me that Dever had contacted him and wanted me to be the compromise candidate, and he hoped that I wouldn't get into the contest because of the fact that there was to be no compromise; this was a feud of long lasting, and the chips were finally down, and there was going to be a battle, and there was going to be a war, and it was going to be won by one side or the other, and that he had given his promise to Bill Burke (who was affectionately known in those days as "Onions" Burke because he was the onion king from Hatfield, Mass.) that he was going to support Burke.

And so, not being able to be compromise candidate of all parties, I talked to both Dever and Senator Kennedy and they went around scouting up a candidate and they came up with John "Pat" Lynch [John M. Lynch] from Somerville.

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Then it was really quite a contest, with the *Boston Post*, for the most part, supporting Burke, and McCormack supporting Burke, and Dever and Kennedy on the other side supporting Lynch. As it turned out, they overwhelmingly defeated Burke, and Lynch became the Democratic State Committee Chairman.

Now the reason at that time that Jack Kennedy was so anxious to make sure that he had a chairman who would be answerable to him or whom he would be very friendly with is because of the system that we had in Massachusetts in those days. The Democratic State Committee Chairman, with the United States Senator, chose the delegates-at-large and the alternates-at-large to go to the National Convention, and they also chose the delegates in all districts where there was a Republican congressman. Where there was a Democratic congressman, then the Democratic congressman chose the delegates himself. [Interruption]

That's either a roll call or adjournment. It's

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a roll call. Pardon me. [Interruption]

Jack Kennedy, when he called me, he was so interested because he said to me—and I can recall the words very vividly—he said, "You know, I'm going to this Convention. Lightning might strike out there. I may be a candidate for vice president, and I certainly don't want to be shut out of delegates and friends that would be operating for me." And he said, "Burke, his feeling is such towards me that he wouldn't give me any shake in the delegates whatsoever. I wouldn't have the best of my workers out there." And, of course, as you know, time went on, he did go out there, and he ran against Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] for the vice presidency. Fortunately, he lost.

STEWART: But you would say this was more of a battle between Kennedy and Burke than it was a major total confrontation between Kennedy and McCormack?

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O'NEILL: Well, Burke and McCormack were pretty much of a team at that time. It's interesting to note that, afterwards, this really lead to a stronger feud between the Kennedys and the McCormacks. Where there had been feeling along the line because Jack had been a maverick and hadn't followed along and hadn't signed the Curley petition and had gone to the White House and complaining about the patronage and various things like that and the Speaker or the Speaker-to-be always considered Kennedy as a youngster that he couldn't depend upon, the breach became wider and wider as years went along and this was one of the things that really opened a real chasm between them, between the Kennedys and the McCormacks, which was later to go on to the Eddie McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] and Teddy feud and the Eddie and Teddy fight.

But McCormack later said to me, "You know," he said, "when Dever spoke to me about you being the compromise candidate, I asked him for time." And he said,

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"I went to Burke, and I asked Burke to withdraw. I said that I wanted to go along with O'Neill as a compromise candidate. And Burke said, 'You've given me your word and I refuse to release you.'" And the interesting thing about it: Had he released McCormack at that time, the great feud of Massachusetts politics that lasted for ten years or so probably never would have taken place.

STEWART: Then you are convinced that there is, that there was a feud?

O'NEILL: Well, there was such a feud. There was; there's no question about it. I mean, there was a natural resentment between the old and the new, between the established and the maverick. There was no question about that.

STEWART: Most of the congressional delegation were able to stay out of this, weren't they? Or were they?

O'NEILL: Well, yes. We followed along the line pretty well. The entire Massachusetts delegation pretty nearly

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voted as a unit at all times. The New England delegation, particularly the Democrats, followed the leadership of McCormack, excepting in one interesting thing: McCormack always voted for the farm bill and all the other members of the Democratic members from New England always voted against farm legislation. And we voted against farm legislation until such time as 1956.



In 1956, I can recall the stories that they told about Johnson [Lester Roland Johnson] from Wisconsin, who was a congressman trying to sell the Wisconsin delegates Jack Kennedy for vice president, and some of the other western congressmen who liked Jack were trying to sell their delegates, and they couldn't sell Kennedy at all because of the fact that Kennedy had always voted against the farm program, which was the traditional thing for the New England Congressman to do. And starting in '57 or '58, we took a turn-around view. We were then pointing to Jack as a candidate

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for the presidency, and all the New England delegation changed their view and always, from then on, voted for the farm program. But one of the real reasons for the New England group changing their policy on it was because they saw the effect that it had on the campaign in Kennedy's fight for the vice presidency, and we didn't want it to happen in his fight for the presidency.

STEWART: That's very interesting. Just to back up, let me ask you a couple of questions relating to 1952 that you talked about. I'm not sure I got the right conclusion regarding Paul Dever's decision to run for another term as governor. Did you say or did you mean to say that his decision was based in part on his desire to help Kennedy in his own election, that Dever really didn't want to run in '52?

O'NEILL: Dever really didn't want to run. He was a tired fellow. His whole family had had a heart condition case within. As a matter of fact, his

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brother Ted and his brother Joe and his brother John, they all died as young men because of heart disease, the same as Dever died from himself. He was tired of politics in '52; he didn't want to run anymore. As a matter of fact, Judge Fox, who was his secretary, and a few fellows around him prevailed upon him to stay in public office.

But I think more than those who were close to him were prevailing upon him to stay in public office was Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.]. He had an agreement with Joe Kennedy, with whom he was very, very friendly. Dever and Joe Kennedy, the Senator's father, were extremely close personal friends, and they had great respect for each other. Dever was a man of tremendous talent, tremendous ability, and probably the greatest governor the Commonwealth ever had. And he told Joe Kennedy that he had had it, he was fed up with politics, he'd like to get out, and Kennedy was one of those who prevailed upon him to stay in.

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Now, Dever at that time said, "Well, I'm not interested in running for reelection to governor. It's a killing job. It's a sickening job. I've had it. I've made too many enemies. There's no sense in it. I could go out and practice law and make ten times as much money as I'm

making, and I've had the honor." And he agreed with Joe Kennedy early in February that he would run again for public office. If Jack Kennedy wanted to run for governor, then he would run for the United States Senator. If Kennedy wanted to run for the United States Senator, then he would stay on and run as a partner and as a teammate, he would run for the office of governor.

As a matter of fact, I recall sitting with Jack Kennedy in Joe Healey's [Joseph P. Healey] home with Tom Mullen [Thomas H. Mullen], my administrative assistant, early in February. He notified me that he would not be a candidate for reelection to the House. He hadn't decided at that time whether he'd run for governor or

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whether he'd run for senator. It looked at that time as though the governorship would have been the easier fight to make because the Republicans didn't even have a candidate at that time. And it looked as though that would be a much easier fight than the Senate fight whom we'd have to be running to knock out Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge]. But he definitely hadn't made up his mind at that time, and he went on to make up his mind and to run for the United States Senate and, of course, to defeat Lodge. I've got to get over to roll call. [Interruption]

STEWART: I was asking you about Paul Dever's decision. There was one other thing I wanted to ask you about the '52 business and about this decision to run or not. I've heard someplace, and I don't remember where, that somehow Cardinal Cushing [Richard James Cushing] was involved in this whole decision as to who was going to run for governor and who was going to run for senator. Do you

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know anything about that at all?

O'NEILL: No. No. Know nothing about it at all.

STEWART: Okay. All right. Could I just ask you a few questions...

O'NEILL: Sure.

STEWART: ...about things that you may have been in contact with Senator Kennedy on while he was in the Senate and when you were a member of the House. For example, he made a number of speeches very early in his Senate career on the economic problems of New England and introduced some legislation thereafter. In general, did you get as much cooperation from his office as you thought was needed or as you thought was necessary on legislation pertaining to Massachusetts?

O'NEILL: Oh, do you want to ask me the question while the mic is on?

STEWART: Yes, it's on.

O'NEILL: Oh, it's on now? I didn't realize that. Well, let me say this to you, I can remember the day that he hired Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]. We were walking down the corridor, and I ran into him and he said, "I finally got some brains into my office."

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From the day that Sorensen arrived on the scene, the whole complex of the Kennedy office changed. Up until that particular time, during his legislative days as a member of Congress and his early days as a senator, it was an office in which there was a public service office more than anything else. It was a question of following patronage. It was a question of taking care of the problems of the boys that were in Korea and health and welfare problems and things of that nature. He didn't really get into the seriousness of the economic plight of Massachusetts.

When he ran for Senator in 1952, you will recall he had many committees—I don't recall all of the committees—the committee to increase the fishing industry of Massachusetts, the committee to increase the electronics industry of Massachusetts, for the tool and dye industry of Massachusetts. He had all these various committees set up. Of course, they were an avenue of being able to collect funds or to

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spend funds for the campaign. I can remember on the day that his father said—and that was at a meeting over at the old Bellevue Hotel, and I was there with John E. Powers and the ground—his father said, "My son's a candidate for the United States Senate. We're going to spend three million dollars in this campaign, and the main thing is that we want to spend it within the letter of the law." And these various committees were set up because under the committees you could send as much money as you wanted to. So there was no death of funds in the campaign whatsoever.

Jack Kennedy was the hardest working candidate that I ever saw in my life. He was really a prodigious worker. And he brought into that campaign a complete new complex, as far as statewide campaigns were concerned. Instead of the old conventional method which we used, in which the ticket would go into Pittsfield and they'd all speak and with the big rallies, and then go to Springfield—they used to make the tour, and

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the entire ticket would go along. While Jack appeared at these rallies—normally, in the course of the day the candidate didn't do too much but talk to leaders in the area, but Jack initiated the idea of going through plants, of speaking to the local high school, of standing out in front of a plant gate. He didn't let an idle moment go from 6 o'clock in the morning till we

finished up at 11 o'clock at night. And this was really a new method of campaigning whatsoever, plus doing what the regular candidates did along the line.

Now when he came down after he got elected and he got Sorenson working for him and he got a half a dozen different fellows banned together from these various committees that he had had—what can he do for the fishing industry, what can he do for the electronics industry—he actually got people working on their problems and their program. He tried to bring their problems and their programs to the Congress of the United States and to see that legislation was filed and

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to see what he could do on behalf of the various industries. So while he had these committees at the outset—they were a phase of raising money—he really did go to work on the problems. And he was a real good United States Senator; there was no question about it.

I can remember, I think, the fishing industry bill was one of the—well, he spoke on the economics of New England and Massachusetts in particular. That was probably his first major speech in the Senate, and he went on from there to file legislation on each one of the industries to see what he could do for the betterment of the area. And he was a hard worker: there's no question about it. He was a good senator.

STEWART: But did you people on the House side in the Massachusetts delegation get as much cooperation on these things from his office as you thought were needed?

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O'NEILL: I would say we got complete cooperation. At that particular time, when he became the Senator—I don't know; I hadn't been down there previous to that—but we started a system of having Massachusetts meetings: We'd meet with the fishing industry; we'd meet the textile industry; we'd meet with the rubber workers; we would meet with the electronics industry. We'd meet with the different leaders of all the various industries, and for the most part it was always Kennedy that was the instigator behind this.

I can recall, for example, one particular meeting that we had that was called by Jack Kennedy in his office, and the purpose of the committee was for a better port for Boston. And we had every department head from the government who had anything to do with shipping the United States materials overseas. And Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] was there; McCormack was there; Wigglesworth [Richard Bowditch Wigglesworth] was there; Curtis [Laurence Curtis] was there—these

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are all congressmen, now, that I'm naming—Tom Lane [Thomas Joseph Lane] was there. All of us represented part of the Port of Boston. Anybody that had anything to do with the Port of Boston was at this particular meeting.

And in those days the Port of Boston used to have one individual down here working for the Port. And one of the fellows that was in charge of shipments of government materials out of the country, he said, "Well," he said, "take, for example," he said, "the city of New York. They have twenty-five employees. Every day somebody from New York knocks at my door." He said, "Take the Port of Louisiana. They got a dozen employees down here." He says, "You from Massachusetts have but one." He said, "He does a good job. I may see him once a month. But you know in government, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease." And he said, "Not that I don't want to send it through the Boston port, but it's just the mere fact that they

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are pressuring me more than I am." And I can remember that particular meeting we did pretty well by the Port. We got some shipments through that normally we wouldn't have had. And, of course, it's not the duty or the function of the United States Senator or the Congressman to chase, seeing if he can get shipments through the Port of Boston. You're down here on legislation, and you've got too many things to do. Well, that's just an isolated example as to the problems in all the various industries in which Jack had these various meetings for.

STEWART: Was there ever any resentment among Massachusetts congressional people about President Kennedy's relations with Senator Saltonstall?

O'NEILL: No, as a matter of fact, the entire Massachusetts delegate worked pretty well as a team together. We all had the highest respect for Senator Saltonstall. Senator Saltonstall had a good office. He

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had his son as an administrative assistant there for awhile; he had Joe Jackson [John A. Jackson]; he had Brad Morse [Frank Bradford Morse], who is now a congressman. They all weaved into the pattern very well. We have never, as far as helping the state is concerned, been divided into Democratic and Republican. We all worked together as a team. And, of course, Saltonstall and Kennedy were awfully close, and they worked together as the same as the legislators work together.

STEWART: Were there ever any major problems about patronage? Well, of course, you...

O'NEILL: Well, we didn't have any trouble with patronage during those years at all because all the patronage went to the Republicans.

STEWART: That's right. What about the operation of Kennedy's Boston office; do you recall any serious problems here?

O'NEILL: Well, Jack never actually ran much of a Boston office whatsoever. He had Grace Burke [Grace M. Burke] up there, and he had Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey]. He

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very rarely went to the Boston office himself. As a matter of fact, the only time that he would go to the Boston office would be on a Saturday morning, and then it would be to sign the mail, for the most part. He would meet people on occasions, if he had appointments with them, in that little office at 108 Beacon or Bowdoin Street—whatever the number is up there on Bowdoin Street—but rarely did he meet people in his Boston office, and very, very seldom was he there, except on Saturday mornings, as I recall. As a matter of fact, he tried at first to close the Boston office.

STEWART: Oh, really.

O'NEILL: And that met with a wave of resentment on the part of the newspapers who carried the story on it. He left it open but with just a minimum of staff.

STEWART: Let me ask you a fairly general question about the Massachusetts Democratic Party and Massachusetts politics. There's been a certain amount of crit-

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icism by people who have written about President Kennedy about the little that he did to try to "reform" the Democratic Party in the state and to generally upgrade the whole practice of politics in the state, which, of course, has received a lot of criticism.

O'NEILL: Jack played no part in the Democratic politics of Massachusetts as far as the party organization was concerned, excepting the election of Pat Lynch as the Chairman of the Democratic State Committee. He had in every city and town, as you know, the Kennedy secretary, and he didn't go through the ordinary channels. If, for example, he was going to have his tea party in the city of Cambridge, he never came to Tip O'Neill or he never came to the mayor of the city or he never came to ward and city committee chairmen or to the city councilors or to the state representatives or to the state senator; he always went through his own little group and they set the whole

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thing up. You were there just as an invited guest like any other citizen of the town: you weren't paid any particular homage; you weren't given an opportunity to speak. He didn't play any part whatsoever with the local pols, whatsoever. No.

By doing that, he did bring in a faction of people who normally never would have been out working for the Democratic Party, and on election day this Kennedy organization would be out on the line (they were working presumably for Kennedy but actually they were helping the Democratic Party by their being on the line), plus the fact that he enabled himself to stay out of the feuds in various cities. As you know, a lot of cities have factions because this group runs for mayor against that group, and if you're siding with one group against another group, you can very easily catch yourself in the middle. Kennedy consequently never played along with the politicians what-

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soever. He had an independent organization in every city and town in the Commonwealth which was known as the Kennedy organization. And believe me, they were resented, for the most part, by the regular Democratic Party. But they were effective; you've got to admit they were effective.

STEWART: Do you ever recall talking to them about this and even suggesting that maybe he get involved more in regular Democratic Party affairs?

O'NEILL: No. No. Never. The only time that I ever had any dealings with him, as far as that is concerned, was with regards to the Democratic State Committee chairman, which he and Dever wanted me to run. He never showed no inclination to get entangled into the mayor's fight in the city of Boston or anything of that nature until the Collins-Powers [John F. Collins] fight came along, and the Friday before he endorsed Powers. But he had never shown any

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inclination to get involved or immersed in any of the political squabbles or scrambles or contests throughout the state; whereas, Ted, on the other side, owns the State Committee lock, stock, and barrel. Until Jack had a personal interest in the State Committee or to see that somebody there was favorable to him, he never showed any interest in it whatsoever.

STEWART: You mentioned in the other interview your conversation with Sam Rayburn about the vice presidency. I want to ask you if you recall specifically what Rayburn's opinion of President Kennedy was, say, in 1959 and 1960. Was he totally convinced that Kennedy was not ready to be President at that time?

O'NEILL: Well, of course, you got to take into consideration that Sam Rayburn was a Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] man. Old Sam was a man of hardheaded opinions, and he never liked Jack Kennedy, and he didn't like him up until that particular time. He was a party man; that's about what it came down to. As I explained in the

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original interview, on the day that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] made his last State of the Union address, Jack Kennedy came over to my office and he said to me, "I have two chores for you." He says, "No matter whether my brother Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] or anybody else gives you some other assignment, this is the assignment that I want you to follow through." He said, "Number one, Sam Rayburn doesn't like me. I think he pulled the rug on me in 1956 at the Convention. And the chances are he'll be the Chairman of the next Convention," because he had been chairman of every convention, [since] '48, that he had been Speaker. He says, "I want you to win him so it won't happen to me again."

Well, I've told you the story about my conversations and my working with Sam Rayburn. But at that particular Convention in '60, Rayburn was not the Chairman; the Governor of Florida was the Chairman of the Convention. But it was along the line that he made the state-

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ment to me that if a man throws his hat into the ring and he doesn't win the nomination and that Convention wants him for the second spot, the by virtue of the fact that he entered the original contest, he hasn't any right to get out of it; he must stay. I don't know whether I mentioned it the first time or not; I recall when I told that to Jack, Jack said to me, "Of course, he thinks that Johnson's going to win, and they want me for second spot, and I won't take second spot under any consideration." He says, "I'm not going to be placed in the position of vice president for four years." He wouldn't have taken any part of it.

STEWART: But Rayburn's big objection to Kennedy personally was that he wasn't that regular as a Party man.

O'NEILL: Well, number one, he wasn't regular—well, it's the first feelings that you have towards a fellow. He didn't like Jack Kennedy when he first came to the House. He didn't like him: number one, he didn't feel as though he did his homework; number two, he wasn't dependable; number three, he was a maverick along the line; number four,

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when he did show up on the floor, he would make a speech and he would get tremendous coverage of the speech, and the Speaker would know that there had been members of the Committee who had worked long and tirelessly and they wouldn't even get their name in the paper. Here was Kennedy coming along without having done the work and taking the credit, or taking the headlines: he resented it, and it was a resentment that he built up against him through the years. Let's just say that he never liked the fellow. That's about what it amounted to.



STEWART: Did Rayburn ever explain this business of Kennedy's charging that he had pulled the rug out from under him at the '56 Convention?

O'NEILL: Well, of course, old Sam said there was nothing to it whatsoever, nothing to that story whatsoever. He said they had the facts all wrong. In the original story, as I remember it, they claimed that McCormack said recognize such-and-such a state, and by doing that, if he had recognized the state that the Kennedys wanted him to recognize,

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they were going to change at that time. But Sam always said, always maintained that there was no truth to that story whatsoever. And to be perfectly truthful, I don't believe there was any truth to the story whatsoever because Sam didn't have too much love for Kefauver, number one. And he had no love, no affection for the Kennedys. And it didn't make too much difference between them, in his opinion, which one got the job. And Sam, he was an extremely conscientious, capable, and truthful sort of man, who lived up to the letter of the law. I don't think he would have deliberately done it; and he always maintained that he never did do it.

STEWART: Your activity for Kennedy before the Convention, I assume, didn't hurt your own relations with Rayburn, did they?

O'NEILL: No. Well, you see, I was always considered—as a member of the Rules Committee where I was....In those days, the committee was eight-seven, eight Democrats and seven Republicans, and the

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two ranking Democrats were conservatives and they weren't—or rather the committee was eight. The committee was—let's see, we had eight; it was eight-four—eight Democrats and four Republicans. Smith [Howard W. Smith] and Colmer [William Meyers Colmer], who were the conservative Southerners on the committee, would vote with the Republicans and would be making it six-six. Well, all the time that I was on the committee, rare was the occasion when Sam Rayburn ever asked me anything. I was always considered to be left of John McCormack.

Jim Delaney [James J. Delaney], Madden [Ray John Madden], myself: we were McCormack people on the committee. Bolling [Richard W. Bolling] and Thornberry [William Homer Thornberry] and the old judge from—oh, let's see, he came from Arkansas—Trimble [James W. Trimble]: they were considered to be Rayburn people. And so if Rayburn had a problem on the committee, he would contact his men; while McCormack, while the

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leadership had a problem on the committee, McCormack always talked to Madden, Delaney and myself. We were considered to be McCormack people, so there was no feeling whatsoever.

As a matter of fact, my relationship with the Speaker was extremely cordial, extremely cordial. As you know, he ran the “Board of Education,” which was a little room downstairs: at 5 o’clock at night old Sam would always go downstairs and put out a couple of bottles of bourbon on the table, and they’d sit around and they’d talk about politics, hunting, sports, for the most part. And there were only about six or eight people that were allowed in that room. I would go in—I would never go in by myself, but I was in on many occasions, invited by John McCormack. And John McCormack would never bring anybody else in but me. Maybe he’d bring Delaney in or Madden in on an occasion, but he’d never take any other member of the House in. It was a very, very select group. Sam called it his Board of Education. There were a couple of newspapermen that he was ex-

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tremely friendly with. There was the Parliamentarian. There was Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs]. There was Lyndon Johnson, who used to come over all the time. As a matter of fact, that’s where I got to know Lyndon Johnson on a first name basis, was because of the fact that on occasions I was in Sam’s Board of Education. Now Kennedy had never been—to my knowledge—never been there. And that was a daily ritual of Sam Rayburn’s. And so I got along extremely well with the old Speaker.

STEWART:                There have been stories that Rayburn, along with the then Majority Leader, President Johnson, blocked Kennedy’s labor reform bill in ’58 and ’59 to embarrass him because, of course, he was making progress towards the nomination at that time. Do you know anything about that?

O’NEILL:                Well, I recall the bill very well. The Kennedy labor reform bill, as I recall, became the Griffin...

STEWART:                Landrum-Griffin [Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959].

O’NEILL:                The Landrum-Griffin Act. And I was one who voted against the Landrum-Griffin Act all the way through. I would

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say no, that once that got on the floor, there was no holding it. And I don’t think it was done as an embarrassment to Kennedy whatsoever. I would say that there would be absolutely no truth to that story. The horses couldn’t stall it, believe me. They couldn’t stop it; the leadership couldn’t stop it. It was a question then of them not getting out too far out of hand where they’d get themselves another Taft-Hartley [Labor Management Relations Act of 1947] bill. In other words, the Landrum-Griffin bill was conceded to be a

moderate anti-labor bill, and it could have been an awful lot worse than it was. The leadership was doing well to hold the reins as tight as they could. I would say there was nothing to that whatsoever.

STEWART: And you can't think of any other measures or circumstances in this period just before the Convention, or say in late '59 or early '60, where Rayburn did anything to upset Kennedy's plans?

O'NEILL: Nothing whatsoever. One of the reasons for that was that the—I don't know whether I mentioned this in my previous broadcast or

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not, but it was at Mike Kirwan's [Michael J. Kirwan] March 17<sup>th</sup> party at the Press Club. This was an Irish party that Mike had been running for years, and this was a fabulous affair. Mike planned the thing very, very well. He was an ardent supporter of Jack Kennedy's. There were no head tables at the affair, and at the particular place where Mike had arranged for Jack Kennedy to sit was between Kennedy [Thomas Kennedy] of United Mine Workers and the President of Steelworkers, Joe McDonald of the Steelworkers.

STEWART: David, David McDonald, yes.

O'NEILL: Dave McDonald [David J. McDonald] of the Steelworkers. Neither of them were too friendly with Kennedy, Jack Kennedy. And so it was arranged. The interesting thing about it was that old Joe Kennedy called from New York previous to the party; he talked to Gene Keogh [Eugene James Keogh] and Mike Kirwan to see if he could get Jack to meet these two fellows because they had been doing what they could out in West Virginia and out in the

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coal mining areas and the steel-working areas to see if they could break him down. And so it was planned that way, that they would be there.

Now that particular night I will never forget. The party was just breaking up, and Homer Thornberry came to me (he was a congressman from Texas), and he said to me, "Lyndon Johnson would like to talk to you, Tip." Lyndon was right there, the Senator. I said, "Sure, I'll be happy to talk to you." So we went over and he said, "Tip, I'd like to have you with me on the second ballot." And I said, "Well, Senator, there's not going to be any second ballot." "Well," he says, "now look it. You've been in politics a long time; you're a former Speaker up there. I understand that you have prestige in the Massachusetts delegation. You can be influential; you can be helpful to me. You know that the boy isn't going to win this fight. You're enough of a politician to know that the boy isn't going to win this fight." And during our conversation never once did he ever mention Jack Kennedy by "Jack

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Kennedy” or “Senator.” He always referred to him as “the boy,” and “I’ll take this state from the boy,” and “I’ll lick the boy here,” and “the boy isn’t getting off the ground,” and all that kind of talk.

And I can remember telling Lyndon Johnson, I said, “The trouble with you, Mr. Senator, is that you underestimate the Kennedys.” I said, “You don’t appreciate the long arm of Jack Kennedy. You don’t appreciate the fact that he’s on television and he’s on national magazines—not by accident, but this is the working of the Kennedy organization, the Kennedy machine. Many hours and much money have been spent and public relations men have worked to put these things in focus. You think that they’re happening by accident; they don’t happen by accident.”

As a matter of fact, it later proved that when they went down to Arizona, Johnson thought he had the ten delegates, and they stole eight of them right under their nose while the father was sitting in a hotel down the street. Young Stew Udall [Stewart L. Udall] and his brother [Morris K. Udall] took eight of

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the ten Johnson candidates away from them, and they didn’t even know what had happened. And the story or the truth of the matter was that neither Sam Rayburn nor Lyndon Johnson respected the ability, the organization, the know-how of the Kennedys, and that’s how Jack got so far out front. So there was no trying to upset him along the line because of the fact that they just never figured that they were going to be as strong as they were.

STEWART:                   Okay. You mentioned, in addition to your dealings with Rayburn, your conversations with William Green [William J. Green, Jr.] and the whole Pennsylvania delegation. Were there any other delegations or congressmen that you were particularly involved with in this pre-Convention period?

O’NEILL:                   No. In those days I was strictly working with Bill Green and talked to Dave Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence] a couple of times along the line. Actually, I think the most instrumental thing that I did in that whole thing, in the pre-Convention work, was to find out a fellow by the name of Joe Clark [Joseph S. Clark] was the real boss up in Pennsylvania and to get the

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message back to Joe Kennedy. And Joe Kennedy through his long arm really got to Joe Clark.

STEWART:                   Was this the key to the Pennsylvania delegation?

O’NEILL:                   I think that was the key to the—well, Clark was the key to the delegation, but you see, Lawrence and Green were opposed to Kennedy because of his religion. They were both Catholics

themselves, but they just didn't feel as though a Catholic could carry the state of Pennsylvania, and they were afraid in future elections of losing the state. And they would rather lose the nation and be able to win the state for themselves. They thought the Catholic issue was a terrific issue. So Mrs. Granahan [Kathryn Elizabeth Granahan], she was running for re-election, and at the time of the primary she came out strong for Jack Kennedy up there. And there was a terrific write-in campaign. My God, the Kennedy write-in was just tremendous in Pennsylvania. And I think that was one of the factors, plus the factors of so many people

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working on Bill Green and working on Joe Clark and working on Governor Lawrence. But I think that the thing that really opened their eyes

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was when they saw that tremendous vote that Jack Kennedy got in the write-in up there without too much work done—without any work being done other than the work that Katie Granahan did.

STEWART:           Because I've heard, oh, different stories from people who had been on the fringes of involvement with that whole situation, and no one seems to know the total story of just how the delegation was switched, but I think—not was switched, but was taken over to Kennedy at Los Angeles.

O'NEILL:           Well, there was a getting aboard the bus that they knew was going to be—look it, Bill Green was one of the most capable and shrewd politicians in the history of this country. He was a real leader. And he could see the way the Convention was going to go. He got in early when he got his delegation there.

STEWART:           A few more things. Were you at all involved in the

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selection of a successor to Kennedy as Senator in Massachusetts.

O'NEILL:           No, I was not involved at all in the selection.

STEWART:           Your name was probably mentioned, wasn't it?

O'NEILL:           My name was mentioned as far as I can understand. The interesting thing about that is Joe Ward [Joseph D. Ward] was the Democratic nominee for governor in that particular year, and he went down to New York to see Joe Kennedy. While Jack was the United Senator and probably played no

part in excepting at election time giving an endorsed statement and sending word out to the Kennedy organizations that we were supporting this candidate, which was usually the whole Democratic ticket (Jack loved everybody excepting the fact that he and Furcolo [John Foster Furcolo] didn't get along), the old man always came in with a terrific hunk of dough; let's put it that way. For example, when Bob Murphy [Robert D. Murphy] was running for governor against

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Herter [Christian A. Herter] in 1954, I think he gave him \$25,000 the first time and \$15,000 later on; he gave him \$40,000. Now anybody who gives you \$40,000 in a campaign, you know, you've got to admit that he's a tremendous asset to your campaign.

Well, Joe Ward was brought down to New York by Howard Fitzpatrick [Howard W. Fitzpatrick] to get a campaign contribution. He went into the room to see Joe, as I understand the story, and Joe said, "Who are you going to appoint United States Senator?" And he says, "Well, I'm going to appoint, I think a good man for the job would be Howard Fitzpatrick." Now the reason he said Howard Fitzpatrick, he knew that Howard Fitzpatrick was very close to the Kennedys. Well, he made a mistake when he said that. What he should have said was, "Look it, whoever Jack wants for the job, Jack can have." And consequently, as I understand it, he left with the animosity of the Kennedys and without any campaign contributions.

Well, now where do I come into the picture? The only thing that I know is they tell me that on Thanksgiving night down at Harwich Port, they were seated around, the whole

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family, and they were talking about who would take it. And they were mentioning this one, and this, and that one, and the father was supposed to have said, "Well, I like Tip O'Neill. He'd be a good man for the job." And the comment was that he was against the Kennedy labor bill, which was the Landrum-Griffin bill. As I understand it, that was the only discussion. They passed on to somebody else's name, and they named probably in the course of the night a dozen different candidates who would be interested in the job.

They said at the time that Kennedy did offer Howard Fitzpatrick the job. Howard is the sheriff of Middlesex county. Howard said he'd take the job providing he could hold the sheriff's job at the same time because he had so many people working on patronage, old-time pals of his, that he didn't want to turn the sheriff's job over. Now that's conjecture; whether that's true or not, I don't know. But, as you know, they eventually came up with Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II].

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Ben filled the term in for two years until Ted was ready to run.

STEWART: You said in the other interview that you had spoken with the President at one point about the race in 1962 between Ted Kennedy and Edward McCormack. Do you remember what this was about?

O'NEILL: What transpired? In February in 1962, about February first, I was seated in my office, and I got a telephone call from Ted Kennedy. He says, "Tip, I'd like to come up and see you." And he said, "I don't want anybody to know that I'm in the building or that I'm going to be in the building. Supposing I see you about 7 o'clock." So he came into my office around 7 o'clock, and he said to me, "I'm a candidate for the United States Senate. Eddie McCormack's a candidate for the United States Senate. My brother Jack told me to come over and talk to you. We'd like to make a deal with the McCormacks." He says, "Here's what we propose: We propose

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that we have a poll. We either take the Gallup poll or the Kraft poll or..."What's the other pollster that they use a lot?

STEWART: Lou Harris.

O'NEILL: "Lou Harris poll, or..." This kid from Philadelphia was doing a lot of them; Italian boy's name. "Or," he said, "Roper [Elmo Roper]. Take one of the national pollsters. We will pay the pollster 50 per cent; they pay the other 50 per cent. If we run within 5 per cent of each other, we'll oppose each other in the election. If we don't run within 5 per cent of each other, if McCormack defeats me by more than 5 per cent, I won't be a candidate, but if I defeat Eddie McCormack by more than 5 per cent, then Eddie McCormack will run for governor and we'll support Eddie McCormack for governor." "Well," I said, "gee, that doesn't strike me as being much of a proposition, Ted. If Eddie McCormack beats you, you could very apt be back in my congressional fight as a candidate

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against me," because he lived in my district. He says, "I give you my word, I won't run against you for Congress, Tip." He says, "That's the proposition. The President would like to have you go to the McCormacks and make the proposition." He says, "There is only one thing. I want you to know that we've already taken a poll, and in the poll I lick Eddie McCormack two to one." This is Ted speaking.

So he proceeded to go overseas; he was going overseas the following day, Teddy Kennedy was. So I took the poll and—or rather, I didn't take the poll; Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] had the poll. I didn't see the poll. So I came down, and I sat down with the Speaker, and I said, "Mr. Speaker, Teddy Kennedy came into my office last night. The President sent him over. They were very much upset about a contest and how people will say that the animosities of the Kennedys and the McCormacks is still in full, and here he is President and you, Speaker.

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They make the following proposition, and I related the proposition. "If they run within 5 per cent of each other, they'll oppose each other; if Teddy Kennedy wins, Eddie is to run for governor and the Kennedys will support Eddie for governor; and if Eddie McCormack wins and Teddy loses, then Teddy will not run for public office." The Speaker said to me, "Gee, that sounds very reasonable to me. It sounds like a good idea."

So he called Eddie on the telephone, Eddie McCormack, and he said, "Eddie, get down here. I want to see you." So Eddie flew down the next morning. So he talked to Eddie about the proposal, and I got a call from the Speaker, and the Speaker said, "I want to see that poll." So I called Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] at the White House, and Larry sent the poll over to me. And I show the poll to the Speaker, and Eddie McCormack looked at the poll. The following day

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the Speaker called me in. He gave me the poll back, and he says, "The answer is that Eddie says no. That poll is a fake and a phony to start off with, number one. But," he says, "that isn't the idea. They know that Eddie's got the Convention all tied up at the present time." Well, the truth of the matter was, as it showed, that Eddie didn't have the Convention tied up, and Teddy Kennedy beat him very, very badly.

Now, an interesting thing developed after. After the convention, Eddie McCormack decides that he's going to be a candidate for the United State Senate. And Teddy Kennedy came to me again. He said, "My brother Jack sent me over to see you. He wants you to be the liaison man between myself and the McCormacks. We would like to have Eddie out of the fight. We don't want Eddie to run for this job." And he said, "You know the polls show that I'm going to lick him two to one, and there's no question that I'm going to lick him. We understand

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that Eddie is in debt over \$60,000. My father can see that he can go to work for a New York law firm and a \$100,000 fee on a case, which will take care of all his expenses and his taxes and clear him out, number one. Number two, if Eddie's looking for a job, we'll give him Under Secretary of the Navy. He's a Navy graduate. We'll make him ambassador to some country, if he's interested in being an ambassador. You know Eddie's an able, capable fellow and can handle these jobs."

So I went to the Speaker, and I told the Speaker, and the Speaker said to me, "I just want you to know, as far as Eddie McCormack is concerned, he's my nephew. Never once did he ever make a decision and come to his Uncle John and ask him for advice. He always made the decision and then came to me and told me what he was going to do. From the first time that he ever ran for the Boston City Council, he didn't come to me and say, 'Uncle

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John, what's your advice?' He came to me and said, "Uncle John, I'm a candidate.' He didn't ask me if I thought he ought to be a candidate for Attorney General. He came and told me he



was going to be a candidate. He didn't ask me if he should be a candidate for the United States Senate, he told me he was going to be. I would like to see Edward out of the fight, but I would never ask Edward to get out of the fight. That's for him to make the decision. I would like to see him out, but he's got to make the decision. So you got and talk to Edward."

So I went and I talked to Edward. With Edward was Charlie Hamilton, who was his secretary and administrative assistant when he was Attorney General. And I laid the cards on the table, what the Kennedys had offered him to get out. And he says, "Oh, I'd like to get out, but my wife would resent it very much." He says, "I'll talk to her tonight at home.

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I'll talk to you tomorrow." So I talked to him the next day. He said, "Can the President pick up the telephone and ask me personally to get out of the fight? If I can say that the President asked me personally to get out of the fight, then I'll get out of the fight."

Well, the next day I went to the White House, and I saw Kenny O'Donnell. And I told Kenny the story. The President's in the next room. Now I'm not going to talk to the President about this; we don't want the President involved in ward politics. But Kenny came back and he said to me, "The President never could ask Eddie to get out of the fight."

To make a long story short, that was the offer that was made. And Eddie stayed in the fight, took his lumps from Teddy Kennedy. That's about the sum and substance of the Teddy Kennedy, Eddie McCormack...And as far as the White House was concerned, they really did want to try and get him out of it because there was too much talk at the time

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about the feeling between the Speaker and the President. That's the story.

STEWART: No one wanted the fight, but yet it came on. Well, this didn't seriously hurt relations between the President and the Speaker, did it?

O'NEILL: Didn't hurt the relationship between the President and the Speaker at all. As a matter of fact, once the President became President of the United States and the Speaker became Speaker, the relationship was as close and as harmonious as anything could possibly be. And it's just amazing the respect today that the Speaker has for young Ted Kennedy, the Senator. He loves him like a son, and he thinks that he's got tremendous ability. I don't know anything about Robert and the McCormacks because he never seems to have been into the picture as far as the Speaker was concerned.

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STEWART: Are you in a hurry or...

O'NEILL: Well, what else have you got?

STEWART: Well, I was going to ask you some general questions about Kennedy's relations with Congress, and then I wanted to ask you about the school aid bill that you were heavily involved in and went against the Administration.

O'NEILL: All right, sure, go ahead.

STEWART: Well, why don't we start with that. In 1961 you opposed the Administration's school aid bill, and it was quite a controversy over the inclusion or non-inclusion of aid to parochial schools in a number of measures that were being considered at the time. Let me ask you generally: Did this harm seriously your relations with the President or people on the White House staff?

O'NEILL: It didn't harm my relationships with the President whatsoever. Well, to be perfectly truthful, my relationship with the President was this type: As a member of the Congress and he was

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a senator, we were very, very close. He used to come to my office with regularity. I'd go to his office regularly. We talked over the problems of the state and the problems of my district and the politics at home. I'd been in his company socially I don't know how many times. I'd always been invited to his house every time he had any kind of function. I considered myself to be awfully close to Jack Kennedy.

After he became elected President of the United States, a little different thing happened. I mean, you have Kenny O'Donnell, you have Larry O'Brien, you have Dick Donovan [Richard K. Donahue]. You have those fellows, all from Massachusetts, who are the coterie around the President, and they're not going to let a Tip O'Neill in. Now, I used to see the President, and the President would say, "I haven't seen you for a month or six weeks. You know you're always welcome. Why don't you ever come over?" The truth of the matter is I couldn't get by

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Larry O'Brien—I mean Kenny O'Donnell or Larry O'Brien. I couldn't get by them. They didn't want the Eddie Boland [Edward P. Boland] or the Tip O'Neills or the Phil Philbins [Phillip Joseph Philbin] over there. They were running the show. I'd have had more of a chance of getting by if I came from Arkansas or if I came from California than if I did from Boston because they knew of the respect that the President had for me and the friendship that we had. And I wasn't just going to get into him; that's about what it amounted to. So I don't think that anything I ever did was anything between our friendships whatsoever.

On the Rules Committee, Powell [Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.] sent up a federal aid to education bill. The federal aid to education bill did not include parochial schools. And the bill came up, and we went into executive session. And in executive session, I said to Smith [Howard W. Smith], "I am voting against having hearings on the bill until such time as the

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Committee on Labor and Education reports the federal aid to schools which includes parochial schools. When that gets over to the committee, I will vote for both of them. I want to vote for the parochial school bill first”—the bill that included parochial schools. “If it can’t get by the Committee, then I will vote for the one that doesn’t include the parochial schools.” But Powell wasn’t going to let that out of Committee.

And so on this particular morning, Dick Donovan...

STEWART: Donahue [Richard K. Donahue].

O’NEILL: Donahue came over to see me. And Dick said to me, “The President has asked me to ask you to vote for this bill today.” And I said, “You tell the President I’m not going to vote for it.” He says, “You want me to tell the President you’re not going to vote for him? Why?” I says, “You tell the President that I’m voting on this committee today exactly the same way he would vote if he were sitting in my seat. I’m going to

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vote to hold the legislation up until such time as the parochial bill is reported over.” And that was the only controversy that I had concerning it. And then they later did send it over. But that’s my section of it, see. Delaney would have to speak for himself. He was the other factor on that particular day. It was, I think, an eight-to-four vote. Our vote was not to have hearings. That was the only....But I had no difficulty with the President on that one.

As a matter of fact, one of the interesting things that—we were talking one day....My daughter was going to school down here at Dunbarton, and she was a delegate to the United Nations, the collegiate night United Nations. She was representing Santo Domingo. And the program was Santo Domingo’s foreign policy with regards to Angola. Well, she got all involved in the thing, and I got all involved in it with her, and a half a dozen congressmen got involved in it. We decided and agreed

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that America’s policy with regards to Angola, which was the same policy that Russia had, was the wrong policy. And about twenty-five of us took the floor of Congress one day, and we assailed the United States policy on Angola and said the policy was wrong. I was over the White House, and Jack said to me, “You’ve come a long way since Barry’s Corner. What do you know about Angola?” So I told him the story how Rosemary....He says, “You know the funny thing about it? I think you’re right as far as the policy on Angola is concerned myself. But we let it go at that. I didn’t ask him why he didn’t change anything. But there weren’t many occasions on which I differed with the Kennedys.

STEWART: That’s what I was going to ask you, if there was any....

O'NEILL: No, I can't think of any along the line. I can recall one particular night—I don't know whether I mentioned this in my last broadcast, or recording with you, or not, but it was around the first of

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October, and I got off the plane at 6 o'clock at night. My secretary met me and said the President wants to see you.

STEWART: Yes, you mentioned that.

O'NEILL: And we went over and we talked all about various legislation, about a half a dozen of us who were over there. So my relationship was always very good, always a very good one.

STEWART: Do you feel now—do you remember if you felt then that it would have been politically possible or feasible for the Administration to support aid to parochial schools in 1961?

O'NEILL: Would it have been possible?

STEWART: Yes.

O'NEILL: I don't think it got a chance to be. That never did come up.

STEWART: Well, in the Administration bill, it wasn't included. Of course, he came out against it. He said it was unconstitutional or his advisors told him it was unconstitutional.

O'NEILL: Yes. It was so many years ago I forget the issue now. You know, it was a big issue at the time but I... We did bring out the bill with parochial schools in it, didn't we?

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STEWART: Yes, well, eventually.

O'NEILL: Well, yes, eventually. Under his Administration?

STEWART: No. No. I don't think so.

O'NEILL: Wasn't it?

STEWART: Not until '64, I don't think.

O'NEILL: Gee, I don't recall it.

STEWART: Yes. But, of course, the whole problem was that, I think, the Administration felt they were pretty much committed from the campaign and because he was the first Catholic in the White House, that they couldn't....

O'NEILL: Gee, I'd have to refresh my memory. As a matter of fact, I've got a book up there on the shelf, *Labyrinth on Capitol Hill*, in which the author describes that whole period and the particular Rules Committee meeting that we were discussing. If I glanced through it, it would probably refresh my mind as to what actually did happen, because I can remember talking to the author later on. He had a couple of quotes in there in which he credits me with making these various quotes in the Rules Committee which I actually said that I didn't say at the time. My version of the story is different than his

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version. Of course, as you know, he had to have been reported to by somebody that was there because he wasn't there himself. But history is written through the eyes of the beholder, so you can see something one way and I can see something another way. I'd have to refresh my memory on that; I don't recall.

STEWART: All right. Were you in general agreement with the expansion of Rules Committee in 1961?

O'NEILL: Yes. Sure. No difficulty there whatsoever.

STEWART: Could I just ask you—a number of reasons have been cited to try to explain President Kennedy's difficulties with Congress. I think the general conclusion now is that his relations with Congress and the amount of legislation that he got passed in three years wasn't, just wasn't that good. As I say, a number of things have been cited to try and explain this: Why wasn't the Kennedy Administration more successful in getting their proposals through Congress? Let me mention a few and get your reactions, your opinions. One, that because his margin in 1960 was so small, a lot of people felt that the Kennedy Administration couldn't help them that much

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In '62 or later in '64.

O'NEILL: No, I don't think that would be a reason at all. Kennedy was extremely popular among the members of Congress as an individual. And he was particularly well liked among the Southern Congressmen as an

individual, even though he couldn't get them to vote with him. But my feeling was that we were just on the verge of being able to put these programs through. I believe that had he lived, the program that later became the New Frontier...

STEWART:           The Great Society.

O'NEILL:           ...the Great Society, I mean, would have all been enacted. Now, one of the things that happened, as I recall—I think it was in January of '63. It was a piece of legislation, one of the first pieces of legislation that the Kennedy Administration had enacted. Oh, I don't recall. It was, you know, a social legislation with regards to helping cities and towns—Manpower Act, I believe.

STEWART:           Manpower Development and Training Act?

O'NEILL:           Right, I think that was it. Well, when it came up in 1963, we lost it by either six or seven votes. The Administration and the leadership of

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the House had taken it for granted that they were going to win it, and consequently the work hadn't been done. And once they lost that bill, which was a complete surprise to everyone, when they lost it, well, you were going downhill, and they never got the train back on the track. And the fellows that had committed themselves against that bill then had committed themselves against the Kennedy Administration, fellows of border Southern states who we should have had voting for us. We lost the bill because the work hadn't been done. And it took an awful long time, but I think that the train was just about back on the track. As I mentioned, it was in that October meeting, early in October, when we talked about the program. And Kennedy wasn't too particular about getting them through for that year; he was looking at them for the following year for the campaign. And there's no question in my mind that we would have put through exactly the same sort of program under Kennedy that we put through under Johnson. That's my opinion.

STEWART:           Again, it's been said—you mentioned that he got

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along personally with many people in the South. On the other hand, a lot of writers have said that he didn't mix that well socially with older, especially the more politically oriented members of Congress.

O'NEILL:           He didn't exactly mix with them, but he had an air about him of tremendous respect that he gave them. He could talk to a senior politician; while he didn't mix with him, he had a certain flair about him which left the fellow with an awfully nice taste. Consequently they liked him. You understand what I'm driving at?

STEWART: Yes. Yes.

O'NEILL: And Kennedy really had no enemies, very, very few enemies in the Congress.

STEWART: Did his ideas, or the image he gave of being a strong president, a strong executive, have any adverse reaction compared to other presidents?

O'NEILL: As far as I can see—now it's hard for me to make a judgment on it because.... There are those who criticize McCormack today in his leadership but they never criticize him in front of me because—I mean, if we're in a social gathering or

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if we're in a political gathering, they never criticize him in front of me because they know that I'm close to him. And I would say the same thing was true under Kennedy. They knew that I was close to Kennedy, that I'd taken his place in Congress, and that we were political and social allies, and so they never criticized him. But I can never recall anybody that's been president since I've been here—and, of course, I've only been here under three, and I did know Harry Truman—that had the personal popularity among the memberships that Kennedy had. He was really extremely well liked by them. It was an amazing thing how he could rattle off the names and call them off. You know, I don't know whether I mentioned this in the first instance or not, but in 1957, after the vice presidential campaign and Jack is now definitely a candidate for President of the United States, Eddie Boland and myself sat down with Jack one day, and we went through the book, and there were seventy-five new Democratic members of Congress in those three terms that were new since he had been in the Congress. So we ran a party out at Dan Hanlon's home.

STEWART: Yes. You mentioned that.

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O'NEILL: And we sent him lobsters. We had each table arranged so there'd be a Fogarty [John E. Fogarty] or a Keogh or somebody that was very, very friendly with him. And from that time on, he really followed the membership of the Congress. Like a page, he could call out a member of Congress by his first name. It was just amazing. And, of course, they liked that too.

STEWART: Well, what was the cause—your general conclusion, then, wouldn't be that the Kennedy Administration was as unsuccessful legislative-wise as many people say?

O'NEILL: Well, we didn't accomplish the important things that later developed in the first years of the Johnson Administration, but we would have accomplished them. I mean, the Kennedys would have, there's no question in my mind. And we got through that year—when, late October or early November—without trying to put the remainder of the program through because we were holding the program off until the next year. But the reason, in my opinion, the reason that we didn't pass most of those is because we lost the Manpower bill earlier in the year, and we had allowed those fellows to commit

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themselves against the Kennedy Administration, and it was taking us all that period of time to get them back on the track. And there was no question in my mind that what later turned out to be the Johnson Administration program, which was the Kennedy program, would have been enacted in the year of the election, 1964. No question in my mind about that.

STEWART: Are there any weaknesses or criticisms as far as the White House legislative effort is concerned that you feel are worth mentioning?

O'NEILL: That was the only mistake that I could ever remember. That was overestimating their own ability, and they didn't do the work. That was a combination fault of the Administration and of the leadership.

STEWART: Just a couple of odds and ends and that's about all I have. Did you feel the Administration was overly cautious about Massachusetts projects or things that would be of benefit to Massachusetts during the Kennedy Administration because of the fear of charge of favoritism?

O'NEILL: There was one instance, along the line—my memory isn't refreshed on it now—in which an issue like

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that came up.

STEWART: The NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration]....Not the NASA. There was a big question of the NASA facility. I guess that wasn't....

O'NEILL: No, it couldn't have been that one. On the first stance of NASA, Boston made a tremendous pitch for it, but Al Thomas [Albert Thomas] was the Chairman of the Committee and he told them in cold turkey, "Houston's going to get this. It's going to be on Rice Institute land or there's not going to be any appropriations for it because I'm Chairman of the Committee. I'll give Boston the next one that comes along." No, I don't really. It seems to me that there was one



instance where it was thrown up because we lost something, that the reason we didn't get it was because the President pulled out because he was....But I don't think there was any truth to that at all.

STEWART: Do you recall any problems over patronage or over positions or jobs?

O'NEILL: As far as the patronage was concerned, the way it works in postal districts is that if you're a Democratic congressman, you have all the naming

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of all of the postal employee promotions in the particular area and you name the postmasters. I haven't had any difficulty. I don't have any postmasters in my district, anyway, because we come under the Boston postmaster, and it's never been open. But I haven't really had any difficulty. I don't think any of us have had any difficulty patronage-wise. And the truth of the matter is that fellows are out of the patronage business in this era much more than it was before—oh, as a matter of fact, I've had them call me to see if I could get a job here, or there'd be an opening here, "Can you fill it?" or an opening there and you fill it. It's not like the thirties when you were in the Depression and everybody was patronage conscious or directly after the war when fellows came home and they had remembered the Depression and they were interested in getting security more than anything else. Jobs come along today that you can't even fill for them within the federal government so there wasn't really any problem with patronage.

STEWART: Well, I'm out of questions.

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Can you think of any other stories or anything we haven't....

O'NEILL: Well, there's a lot of stories I think we could tell, but probably they best remain untold.

STEWART: Well, you know you can close this tape and transcript for as long as you want.

O'NEILL: Well, I want to make sure that the story about the Teddy—you know, the McCormack incident, close that. Let's not have that open to the eyes of the public until plenty of time has gone by.

STEWART: Yes. Is there anything else?

O'NEILL: No, not offhand. I was telling a story to the fellows last night. I don't know whether we ought to put it on the tape or not but...I was an advance man for Kennedy out in St. Louis. I got a telephone call from Dick Maguire [Richard Maguire]—Bob O'Hare was with me, from Boston—and I got a telephone call from Dick Maguire, and Dick said, "Go over and meet Gus Busch [Augustus A. Busch, Jr.]. He will run a breakfast with Jack Kennedy when Jack comes to town." So Bob and I went over and saw Busch. Busch says, "I'll run a breakfast. I'll have thirty

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people there at a thousand dollars a pot."

When Jack came in—I think it was on a Thursday morning—we had the breakfast at a place called Southland Motel. Twenty-nine people showed up. As you came in, you shook hands with the Senator and you had your picture taken. Busch came over to Bob O'Hare and he says to Bob, "Here's twenty-nine thousand dollars: seventeen thousand in checks, and twelve thousand in cash." So I said, "Well, Gus, it's your affair. You give it to the Senator." He says, "No, I don't want to give it to the Senator." He said, "Some of my friends would think that I was taking advantage. I'd rather have you people give it to him."

Bob and I walked into the men's room, and Jack came in. Bob said, "I got twenty-nine thousand here: twelve in cash and seventeen in checks. Shall I send it to Maguire or shall I send it to the National Committee or what will I do with it?" The President said, "No, give Kenny O'Donnell the checks and give me the cash." And I looked at him and I said, "This business is the same whether

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you're running for ward alderman or whether you're running for President of the United States." [Laughter] So you can strike that one from the record.

STEWART: Is there anything else you did during the campaign? I didn't mention that.

O'NEILL: Oh, gee, it was interesting out in St. Louis, the tremendous crowds that we drew out there. There was a fellow by the name of Charlie Brown [Charles H. Brown] in Congress in those days. I went out with Bob O'Hare, and we stayed out there for about ten days. We were the advance men for Kennedy's trip through St. Louis. We were to go to Columbia that afternoon (there was a ball game between the University of Missouri and the University of Kansas; they were both undefeated football teams that year), but we couldn't get the plane in. Well, Charlie Brown—he represented that area down by Oklahoma where the Ozarks are, you know—Charlie was saying, "Don't bring Kennedy out to my area. I don't want Kennedy. Kennedy is going to be the cause of my being defeated," and so on and so forth. Kennedy is drawing these magnificent crowds everywhere

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you can go. So I got a call from Charlie. He says, “Tip, I understand Kennedy is not going to go to Columbia. You got to bring him into Joplin. You got to bring him into Joplin.” I said, “I thought you didn’t want him out there.” “You got to bring him into Joplin.”

Well, we brought him into Joplin. Gee, what a crowd. About twenty thousand. It was tremendous.

We went from there to Wichita, Kansas. And I can remember the parade in from the airport. There was a sign: “We don’t want the Pope over in this country,” “Kennedy, we have no use for Catholics.” They booed him along the line. But he could take that in stride just like water rolling off a dam. He’d have that beautiful smile, and honestly a fellow would be standing up there with a sign and the woman would feel ashamed of the husband with the anti-papist sign that he had. We went into the ball park in Wichita, and going into Wichita that day, it was the poorest reception that he received, I think, anywhere during the Convention. We got to the ball park, and the ball park was filled to capacity, and they put on the greatest—it was like

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a convention—the greatest show that I ever saw.

Well, we left there and we went to Independence, Missouri. We met Truman. And the crowd at Independence, I never saw anything like it in all my life. Here we had an opportunity to meet Kennedy and Truman, and Truman was going to come out for Jack. It was really the first time he had come out. And then we went from Independence to Kansas City. In Kansas City that night, Jack had a big rally—and the effort and the work. You know, you go out there and you spend ten days setting all this thing up, and then it all happens in one day. But on that particular day, it was interesting. Jack had crossed the time line about three times. And now we were out in Kansas and it’s, what, two hours different than New York. He was flying back to New York at 10 o’clock at night. Well, let’s see, what would it have been? Oh, it would have been...

STEWART:           Midnight.

O’NEILL:           ...midnight out in New York. Anyway, he was trying to get to New York for some kind of affair that he was going to speak at at midnight. Oh, it was awful, I mean, trying to make the schedules. But I’m in the Muehlebach Hotel—Meuhlebach Hotel, I think it was—in

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Kansas City and I got a telephone call. Dick Maguire said, “I’m sending this doctor out from New York City. He wants to be an advance man.” So he arrived—I don’t even recall his name now, but he arrived in Kansas City. We had cancelled out Columbia so he was to go to Joplin. So I sent him down to Joplin—this was about three days in advance—to get some publicity and to make the arrangements for Kennedy’s coming into Joplin.

And we got down to Joplin, and, as I said, the crowd was tremendous there. And the doctor was so pleased with himself. And he had front page stories of Kennedy in the newspaper. I said, "These are tremendous." And I opened up the paper, and there was a page full of ads. I said, "Who paid for the ads?" "Well, I'll tell you," he said. "The editor promised me he'd give me a front page story and front page coverage if I'd take three thousand dollars worth of ads." "So," he said, "I paid for the ads myself."

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Now we're in the hotel, and Kennedy in Kansas City in the Muehlebach. Kennedy's getting ready to go out to the auditorium to make his broadcast, and this doctor said to me, "Gee, this has been wonderful working out here for four days." He says, "I'm so proud. I'm so pleased. There's only one thing I got in mind. I'd hate to go back home after having been out here these four days and say I've never met the candidate." "So," I said, "you've never met the Senator?" So he said, "No." So I took him downstairs, and I said to Kenny O'Donnell, "Kenny, this is the fellow that set the Joplin rally up. Would you have him say hello to Jack?" Well, Jack just stepped out of the shower, and he's got a towel draped around him, and he shook hands with him, and the fellow was thrilled.

Well, about half an hour later Jack was walking down the corridor and I'm walking with him. And he said to me, "Who's that fellow there?" And I said, "That's

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the fellow that put the Joplin rally on." I said, "He spent three thousand dollars today on that rally. He did a tremendous job." Jack said, "Gee, have I met him?" I said, "You shook hands with him in there." He says, "He's entitled to more than that." He says, "Let me put my arm around him." So he put his arm around him and he walked down the corridor with him, and the fellow went away with the greatest thrill that he ever had in his life. And I think until this day or until the day he dies, he'll always talk about Jack Kennedy having his arm draped around him walking down the corridor of the Muehlebach.

Well, there isn't much more that we can talk about. I suppose there's hundreds of stories we could tell but whether they'd be interesting or not....

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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