

Myer Feldman Oral History Interview –JFK#3, 3/6/1966
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Feldman, (1914 - 2007); Legislative assistant to Senator John F. Kennedy (1958-1961); Deputy Special Counsel to the President (1961-1964); Counsel to the President (1964-1965), discusses coordination between campaign offices, selecting key members and planning the National Convention, and JFK and Foster Furcolo's joint appearance, among other issues.

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Myer Feldman – JFK #3

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Third Oral History Interview

with

MYER FELDMAN

March 6, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start with the discussion about the primaries of 1960.

FELDMAN: Well, in order to discuss the primaries of 1960, you really have to go back before that to 1956. After the 1956 election, during which Kennedy was a candidate for the vice presidential nomination, it became apparent that he would be a candidate for either the presidency or the vice presidency in 1960. At the time I joined Kennedy in 1958 it was pretty definite – at least I got the distinct impression that he was seriously interested in running for the presidency. Everybody outside the office told me he was running for the presidency because he wanted to be vice president. Everybody in the office – and by people in the office I meant principally Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] and Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] – told me that

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he was running for the presidency, and that the vice presidency was not an office in which he was particularly interested at that time. However, I also knew that John F. Kennedy had not finally made up his mind. He was still making speeches around the country. I was hired, in part, because he was preparing for the presidency. I say I was hired in part for that reason because I was not from Massachusetts; my skills were not appropriate to a Massachusetts senator. My background was broader, and I would be useful in a campaign for the presidency. Indeed, that's the only basis on which I joined the office. I had been with

Fulbright [J. William Fulbright], and there wasn't any particular interest in joining a junior senator unless he were seeking higher office.

So in 1958 it was pretty definite that John F. Kennedy was seriously considering the presidency but had not definitely made up his mind either that he would be a candidate or the method that he would pursue to gain the nomination. The first step in that direction however – in the effort to become a candidate for the president – was the '58 senatorial election. He had to win that overwhelmingly. We've gone through that and he did

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win it overwhelmingly.

So now in 1959 when he came back to the Senate, forces were set in motion to help him toward the objective of the presidency. We established a very comprehensive filing system of all the important figures in all the states in the union. Positions which we took were positions which had in mind the fact that he was a national figure rather than a Massachusetts figure. The office was organized in such a way that it was directed toward the whole nation rather than just Massachusetts. For instance, if he were just a Massachusetts senator, he might do what Fulbright does and that is just answer letters from constituents. Instead, we made sure we answered letters from everybody, no matter where they wrote from. If he were a Massachusetts senator, he would limit himself largely to speeches in Massachusetts or to Massachusetts groups. Instead we concentrated on national speeches that gained national attention. If he were a Massachusetts senator, the newspaper reporters in Massachusetts would be the important ones. They would be the people I should call with releases. Instead, we made sure we covered all the wire services and the newspaper reporters for the big dailies. If he were a Massachusetts

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senator, there wasn't any particular advantage to being on the cover of a national magazine or writing an article for a national magazine. But we did. We wrote for Life [Life Magazine], and we wrote for a good many other such publications. We were receptive to invitations to appear before national audiences as well as to have stories written about Senator Kennedy that went to mass media circulations that covered the whole nation.

MORRISSEY: How was this sort of activity within the Senator's office coordinated with Steve Smith's [Stephen E. Smith] operation?

FELDMAN: Well, Steve Smith at this time hadn't yet....At the time I'm talking about, we were just getting started. Now Steve Smith's office, I guess, was formed around the summer of 1959. By that time a lot of these other things had gotten started. Not much was done in Steve Smith's office. It was a very small office in the Esso Building. Between the summer of '59 and the end of '59....I think Steve's office developed and assumed major proportions around the time of the announcement that he was a candidate. Prior to the time Kennedy announced that he was a candidate for the presidency,

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there was an office, but it didn't do much. Almost everything was still done out of the Senator's office in the Senate Office Building. Steve's office consisted of just a couple of rooms and just a couple of people and he was accumulating staff and getting established for the major campaign. The intellectual side of the campaign – and that's the way I would describe what I've been saying – was entirely in the Senator's office.

Now beginning with the announcement – and let me discuss the announcement briefly. The first question was when the announcement should be. There was some advantage to being first. And I remember discussing with Ted Sorensen and with the Senator on one occasion whether or not he should have an announcement at such a time as he would be sure that he was the first announced candidate for the presidency. A lot of commentators had written stories which described the Kennedy campaign as “an early foot” campaign. This has some horse racing significance which indicates that the horse that's out in front at the time they break from a barrier never comes in first. So he was inclined to be downgraded as somebody who was out in front during the

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early stages of the consideration for the nomination for the presidency, but that he would not stay out in front.

Now, our theory was different. Our theory was that he couldn't have too much exposure because he wasn't well enough known for a national candidate despite the fact that he made so many speeches and appeared in so many national magazines and so on; secondly, that it was nonsense to believe that there wasn't an advantage in being out in front first and staying there; thirdly, that just being the favorite itself drew some people to him and gave him support that he would need. We didn't respond to advice suggesting that he was getting too much exposure. Now when we came to decide when the announcement should be made, all this was involved because if we delayed the announcement until later on – until just before primary dates, perhaps after the New Hampshire primary even – then you're not free to do all the things that you should do. The Esso office couldn't be in full operation until he became an announced candidate. Secondly, by being the first announced candidate, that in itself draws additional attention. So we thought in terms of an early announcement. And Kennedy expressed himself that way when we

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discussed it. I don't believe there was any dissent. Ted Sorensen felt that way certainly.

Then we were surprised, however, by Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] announcing, I think, a couple of days before Kennedy did so he really became the first one. He did it very suddenly, and we didn't have any prior information about it. We thought he would announce, but we felt he would wait until Congress convened. Oh yes, that was the other factor. We wanted to announce early, but we didn't want to announce while Congress was away because we wanted all the reporters there, and we wanted this to be at a time when

news was centered on Washington rather than on the statehouses. So for that reason we chose when Congress convened. I think it was January 2, or thereabouts, 1960, that he made the announcement.

The draft of the Kennedy statement was done by Ted Sorensen. I remember he gave it to Senator Kennedy a few days before January 2, and Senator Kennedy of course went over it. Then I remember Senator Kennedy calling Ted and me into his office just before he went over to the room in which he made the announcement. (It was one of the committee rooms, as I remember, with all the television cameras and everything else.) He

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seemed to be a little bit nervous, more than...He wasn't completely calm. We waited around to walk with him to the hearing room, but he suggested we walk on ahead for a minute. So we left the office, and he was in the office himself for a minute or two while we went out into the hallway of the Senate Office Building. I don't know what the purpose for that was, but my guess is that he probably considered this a deeply religious moment, and he just wanted to be by himself for a minute or two. He joined us in the hallway shortly thereafter and we walked over to the committee room together. Then he made his statement and committed himself the questions. He then came back to his office. And I remember Ted Reardon came into the office and said something like, "Well, Jack, we've just taken a poll in the office, and we've found that you're going to win. The vote was something like thirteen to nothing." [Laughter] Which made him laugh a little bit. It was a tense and obviously important moment in his life. I guess I don't remember his ever doing anything like that at any other time.

Oh yes, he decided that his image was that of a rather conservative senator. He hadn't been in the

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forefront of liberal causes. Indeed, we were always being criticized for having not spoken out against McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] and not having done all the things that liberal senators were supposed to have done. So he decided early it would be important to associate himself with somebody with impeccable credentials as a liberal. I suspect for that reason as much as for any other reasons he announced that Chester Bowles would be his foreign policy adviser. I wasn't quite sure what that meant when he announced that he would be his foreign policy adviser. They were friends; I was a friend of Chester Bowles; most of the people in the office were friends of Chester Bowles. He was a good clear thinker, an excellent writer on foreign affairs, and he had had a good deal of experience, but we didn't need any one foreign policy adviser. In fact, I don't know that we made a great deal of use of Chester at any time in the pre-nomination days except at one point, and I'll come to that later on.

MORRISSEY: I wonder if Bowles' close relationship with Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was a factor in that.

FELDMAN: Well, if your question is did we think Bowles could help

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us persuade Stevenson to support Kennedy, the answer is no. We were confident that Bowles could not help persuade Stevenson. We had other people working on trying to persuade Stevenson who were closer to him than Bowles, people like Newt Minow [Newton N. Minow]. Newt Minow used to come around to the office regularly to talk to us, and each time we would kid him. Now Newt, I think, was a Kennedy supporter. He told me later that he spent most of the time trying to persuade “the Gov,” as he called Governor Stevenson, that he should announce his support for Kennedy. If Stevenson had announced his support for Kennedy, he could have become an integral part of the pre-nomination organization; he could have had a voice in everything that we did; I think he probably could have had any job he wanted. I think Newt Minow was right – that “the Gov” should have been persuaded to support Kennedy. But there were others that went out to see Stevenson at Libertyville, his farm, to try to persuade him, people as different as Dave Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence] and Phil Graham [Philip L. Graham] and Newt Minow and, I think, Bill Blair [William McCormick Blair, Jr.] too, who was very close to

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Adlai Stevenson. My guess is that Adlai, in the back of his mind, always thought that the miracle would happen, and he would get the nomination again, and this time he would win. I’m told by others who were close to him that he never gave up this idea until the final vote at the Democratic Convention. Mary Lasker tells me that in her conversations with him.... You want to cut this off for a minute? [Tape recorder off] So for that reason it was impossible to persuade Adlai Stevenson that he should throw his support to John F. Kennedy.

We always felt that if Adlai Stevenson had at any point done what was the reasonable thing – and no politician who has been in Adlai’s place ever does the reasonable thing; this is not being critical of Adlai in any way – the opposition of John F. Kennedy probably would have vanished because he would have had enough support from the Stevenson group, plus what he had developed himself, to make it clear that he was going to get the nomination on the first ballot. It was clear to us ultimately, but it took a long time to get to that point. So the answer to your question is that – the long answer to your question – Chester Bowles was not enlisted as a Stevenson man, but was enlisted as an authentic liberal to give

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the liberal tone to the Kennedy campaign.

MORRISSEY: The surmise underlying my comment was that Bowles’ political symbolism more than anything else might have been one reason why he was chosen at that time to be an adviser.

FELDMAN: Yes, that's correct. That's exactly what I'm saying. But, as I hasten to add, he was made foreign affairs adviser but did not have a great deal to say about it. He had, as I said, only one major function. He was a good idea man. So when the time came to select the head of the Platform Committee, we selected Bowles. When I say "we" you may wonder how John F. Kennedy, who was nothing more than just a candidate and who was not in control of the National Committee, could select the platform chairman. Well, that in itself is quite an interesting story.

Sometime early in January of 1960, Senator Kennedy called me into his office and said, "Would you and Sorensen (he hadn't told Sorensen yet as I remember because Sorensen was busy with some other things) meet with various other people who are interested in the '60 Convention and see that procedures are worked out and that are not going to prejudice my

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candidacy." I asked who they would be. He said, "Well, you would meet with Paul Ziffren (who was then national committeeman from California), Camille Gravel (who was then national committeeman for Louisiana), Margaret Price's deputy (who is now national committeeman from Michigan. Mildred Jeffrey, her name was. However, she was there not as national committeeman from Michigan but as, really, an aide to Walter Reuther), and also with Jack Conway (who was Walter Reuther's assistant) or Leonard Woodcock." Now Mildred, in fact, only met with us once during that entire time. Leonard Woodcock met with us regularly. Jack Conway, occasionally. One or another of them, though, was in this group.

Now we met, I would say, probably ten times for the purpose of discussing the organization of the Convention. None of us had any official titles. All that we had in common was a allegiance to John F. Kennedy. All of us were for Kennedy, and we were going to do what we could to get the nomination for Kennedy. The problem was making sure that the Convention was not rigged against

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us by Rayburn [Sam Rayburn] or somebody else. We felt we had a sympathetic person in Paul Butler who was chairman of the National Committee.

MORRISSEY: That's a point of some dispute, I understand.

FELDMAN: Well, as I say, we felt we did. Let me go on a little bit. I think we proved we did. Nobody ever knew about this group that was meeting. I don't think there was ever any story about it; I don't believe Paul Butler ever knew about it. The participants always kept quiet. I don't know that this had a major effect on the nomination, but it accomplished some things. During our meetings we would discuss who would be a good person for the Committee on Credentials; who would be a good person as chairman of the Platform Committee; how should the votes be allocated. We went into all the problems that the Convention would probably face. When we decided what would be advisable from the Kennedy point of view, we would check with Senator

Kennedy. If he approved, someone would be designated to put into action a plan to accomplish it. For instance, if it were the selection of the....

Two of the key questions was who should be the keynote speaker, and who should be the temporary chairman. Now Hale Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs] was almost

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everybody's candidate for temporary chairman, but Hale Boggs was a Catholic and to have a Catholic as temporary chairman didn't seem to be wise. So we had to look around for somebody else. Once we decided who it ought to be, then we enlisted the aide of Camille Gravel, who was a good friend of Paul Butler's to see Paul Butler and say not that he was representing anybody but just on his own to advise him on what was best. I think Camille was chairman of the committee to select the temporary chairman. Similarly Paul Ziffren was useful through other friends that he had to get to Paul Butler and make these suggestions. But the committee would make recommendations to the Senator; the Senator would decide in each area. Then we'd try to put it into operation either by getting in touch with Paul Butler or by having various people get in touch with the people that had the decision to make. As I say, I think it was a fairly effective group. I attended most of the meetings. I think Sorensen attended one or two of this group. We like to think that it was a useful operation.

MORRISSEY: I forget who the temporary chairman was.

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FELDMAN: I've been trying to think myself. It'll come to me. It was not Hale Boggs. I remember we rejected him for that reason. Yes, I do know. It was Governor Collins [LeRoy Collins]; we finally decided on Governor Collins of Florida. He became the temporary chairman and did a very good job. I think he justified our confidence.

MORRISSEY: How about the choice of a keynoter?

FELDMAN: Well, there we had to bear in mind the kind of impression the keynoter would make on the audience. It would be a nationwide television audience. It had to be a particular type and it had to be somebody who wasn't committed to a particular candidate. I need a drink. All right, what are we going to go into now? Let's see we haven't gotten into the primaries yet.

MORRISSEY: No, I was wondering if there were other possibilities for the keynoter, in addition to Church [Frank Church], who were seriously considered.

FELDMAN: Oh yes, yes. I think we considered one person who, from hindsight point of view, would have been a big mistake. We considered Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] as a possible keynoter. The reason we didn't take Gene McCarthy was largely because he was a Catholic. But from a hindsight

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point of view, he was for everybody except John F. Kennedy and he demonstrated this as a result of his actions at the Convention. He made a very powerful speech for Adlai Stevenson, not because he was for Adlai Stevenson but because he was against Kennedy. He was for Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] really. As a result of his actions at the Convention, there was a residue of the old feeling between McCarthy and all of the Kennedys for a long time.

We also looked around systematically at all the state governors. We wanted to get governors in the act. That's how we got to Governor Collins. At the same time we also knew that civil rights would be an important issue in the campaign, and so we didn't want somebody who would get up on nationwide television and with that broad Southern accent hurt. That was the objection to Governor Collins. However, Governor Collins had such a good record in the field of civil rights that we decided that that was all right. But, as I say, this little group was, I think, a pretty effective organization and operated pretty effectively within narrow limits. We had to call for help on a good many other people who were sympathetic to our cause, but we were designated as the people who would make the

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decisions and then check with the candidate. In fact, I think I still have records of our deliberations. I may give them to the Library.

MORRISSEY: Wonderful. Did you concern yourself with anything in addition to the Platform Committee, the choice of a temporary chairman, and the choice of a keynoter?

FELDMAN: Oh yes, we took up the chairman of all the committees. I would be in the school that would suggest that Paul Butler was friendly to John F. Kennedy because he did not reject any of our suggestions. I think almost everybody that was appointed was acceptable to us. Now it's true that we made the suggestions, and there we tried to get Paul Butler to consider that it was his suggestion. He did not know that it came from the Kennedy people. But then after he got the idea and after he made the recommendation, he would check with each of the leading candidates. He would check with Kennedy and he would check with Humphrey, and he'd check with Johnson, and he'd check with Symington [Stuart Symington, II], and so on, to make sure that they were acceptable to them. But getting Butler to make the recommendation was a major step in the right direction because he himself had considerable

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support among the membership of the National Committee. Even though he didn't have any political office, there were a lot of people who respected him for his courage and for his integrity and for his judgment. As you may remember, he was a controversial chairman, a

strong one. So our committee would try to get Butler to think that he thought up the idea. Then he'd come back to Kennedy to check it even though Kennedy was one of those who had made the suggestion. Butler tried to retain at all times an impartiality. So long as he was chairman, he tried to retain an independence from any of the candidates. I think he did it rather successfully although, as I say, I'm convinced his bias was always in the direction of Kennedy.

Now I've come a long way from what I was going to discuss which was the primary campaign. After the announcement of John F. Kennedy for the presidency, the Esso office became very active, took on a lot of people. It had to buy campaign materials. It still didn't do much of an intellectual nature. For instance, when it came to the selection of a slogan for the campaign, it wasn't the Esso office that selected

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that slogan; that was done up at our offices. But it was at a meeting in the Esso office that the slogan for the campaign was derived.

MORRISSEY: By slogan do you mean the "New Frontier" thing?

FELDMAN: No, no, I mean "a time for greatness." We needed something that would catch attention and that we could put on posters and everything. I remember Sorensen, Steve Smith, and I met in Steve's office one afternoon in the Esso building and tossed around various themes that had been suggested. We had a number of memoranda from various people. None of them seemed to really fit the idea we wanted to get across. The closest, I guess, was...Originally it was not "a time for greatness." It was "a call to greatness." We had just about decided that was the best when we decided that we couldn't quite say "call." That didn't quite express it. So Ted, who also had thought of "a call to greatness," said, "How about 'a time for greatness?'" This wasn't on any of the suggestions that had been submitted, but Steve thought it was good. I thought it was great. That became the slogan of the campaign.

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Similarly, I think all of the other important intellectual activities, as distinguished from strictly political activities, were carried on either in the Senate offices or in the Esso offices largely by the Senate staff.

The Esso offices were organizational offices. They had people like Bob Wallace [Robert Wallace] who was in charge, I think, of the western states. They divided the country into different areas, and they enlisted people to travel among the various states to try to convince people that we thought would be delegates to the Convention to support Kennedy. They also got out the material, a lot of which was written in the Senate offices and sent down there. Any major piece of material or any major radio spot throughout this entire period, even throughout the primary campaigns, was done up in the Senate offices. It was just the organizational activities that were carried on at the Esso offices. But those offices grew; there were a great many organizational offices. They had maps on the wall first dividing the

country into districts and then as we got into the primary campaigns, dividing the states into their districts with the people who were in charge of each one of the districts.

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They put pins in at the appropriate places – this is all right; this is not all right. It was run like a war or a staff organization for your Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was always a lot of fun.

As you know, early in the campaign, we hired Pierre Salinger. Pierre had been with Bobby's [Robert F. Kennedy] committee. I guess the first time we really talked to him about the campaign was at a luncheon that Ted and I had with Pierre. I knew Pierre but very, very casually. I think Ted had about the same kind of relationship with him. Senator Kennedy thought it would be a good idea if we got together. So we decided to have lunch right after he had gone in to see Senator Kennedy to talk to him about his duties. So we had lunch, and we discussed personal things and then got into the duties of a press officer for a candidate. Pierre, I had the feeling, was a little bit unsure of himself then. He's changed a great deal from those days. Pierre had a high opinion of himself; I don't mean he was unsure of himself as a reporter. But I had the feeling that Pierre had never done anything like this; he was a little bit lost; he was looking for guidance. His experience in politics had been limited to some

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politics in California, nothing on a nationwide scale. So the luncheon was devoted largely to assuring him of how good a job he could do for Senator Kennedy. I must say that my impressions at that luncheon are still vivid to me, and they were very good of Pierre. I thought we had gotten a top notch fellow for the job. He was quite young. But everybody in the organization was young; this was characteristic of it. He did not have the entre to the Kennedy group that most people had, and that was a bad back. [Laughter] He had to acquire that later on.

Anyhow, I'd say by the end of January it was a fairly smooth functioning organization. You asked earlier what the relationship between the Esso office and the senatorial offices was. I've given you some idea of the relationship. I haven't told you that both Ted and I...We were really the only two members of the Senator's staff that were very active in the campaign at this point. Ted Reardon still kept the office running. We were the only three...Oh no, there was a fourth man in the office. Fred Holborn [Frederick L. Holborn] still worked on correspondence in the office, but Ted and I both had functions in the campaign and in the office. Ted got into the

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political part of it to some extent.

MORRISSEY: Ted Reardon or Sorensen?

FELDMAN: Ted Sorensen. I had very little to do with political organizational techniques or with actually getting in touch with politicians to enlist their support. The Esso office would send important people to the Senate office if it was important to them to get their support. They had a program problem. For instance, I think that we carried one of the states because of a program issue. This developed later on and was a thread that ran through the entire Kennedy Administration in the White House.

Sometime toward the end of the spring, I guess, Governor Hollings [Ernest F. Hollings] of South Carolina stopped in to see Bobby. Bobby tried to enlist his support for John F. Kennedy. Hollings had the reputation of being pretty much anti-civil rights at that time – perhaps he still has that reputation. Anyhow, he stopped in, and he wanted John F. Kennedy to do something for his textile manufacturers. We had textile mills in New England, and we could express some sympathy for them, but we had no program for them. So the only thing that Bobby could do and what Steve could do, was to suggest that they come up and see the Senator, together with two others –

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two of the leading people in South Carolina. One of them was Gordon McCabe who represented the Stevens Mills. The other, I think, may have been Bill Reed or somebody else. Oh, Bill Roughin I think it was, who was the president or vice president of the association. Anyhow, Fritz Hollings came in to see Senator Kennedy with these other two. Senator Kennedy called me in and asked me to talk to them. He introduced Fritz to somebody who was a good friend though I doubt that he knew him very well at that time. But I could get from this introduction the fact that I ought to do whatever I could. They didn't want a great deal. They wanted some expression of opinion from Senator Kennedy concerning their problem and how he was going to solve it. Their problem was chiefly that exports from foreign countries to the United States were flooding the American market, and that, therefore, there was reduced output of textile products in the United States and reduced employment and reduced profits. They wanted something that could stem this flow of goods into the United States.

The reception they received from Senator Kennedy

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was good. He could tell them that he was familiar with this textile problem; he came from New England; they'd had the same problem. He had to be careful he didn't talk about run-away mills though because the mills had left New England to go to South Carolina or to the Southern states, and they didn't like the phrase "run-away mills." All he could do was express a sympathy for them. I talked to them. I was aware of the fact, without Senator Kennedy telling me, that we were on the horns of a dilemma. On one hand, we could not be protectionists. Well, we believed in liberal trade principles and we needed the support of the liberal trade groups. So we just couldn't come out and say, "We're going to cut off exports from foreign countries or cut off imports to the United States." At the same time, this was a problem. Even the textile union, headed by Pollock [William Pollock] at that time, had

written to us and had wanted to come in to see us – we hadn't seen them up until then – to discuss with us the problem that was presented by increased unemployment as a result of deterioration of the market for American textiles.

So after some discussion, Fritz Hollings and I agreed

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that the best way to handle this was to get Fritz to write a letter to Senator Kennedy expressing their concerns. We would respond with some kind of program that, then, he could take to the textile manufacturers – and there are about a thousand members in the institute itself – and say, “This is our candidate because you can see he's going to do something. He's not just going to be like Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and talk about it.” Their big complaint about Eisenhower was that Eisenhower would talk and would appear to be sympathetic, but he would never do anything for them. So I dictated the letter for Hollings to send to me, and I handed it to him. I said, “You go back home and put it on your stationary and bring it in.” Then I dictated the letter that we would respond with, and I showed it to him. I said, “Now you show it to your people and see if this kind of response would be what they would need in order to fully support us.”

Well, he did that, and the response was satisfactory. The response did not take any specific position with regard to either the encouragement or the prohibition against imports. What the letter did do was to say that this was a serious problem, that we would take

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steps. And it had, I think, a three or four point program. I think it called for some tax incentives to modernization; I think it had increased research; I think it called for an appropriate program that would assist the mills and their employees where the mills suffered from imports, and by that I meant either an unemployment insurance of some kind for the employees or a small business assistance or governmental assistance to the mills, and a couple of other things along those lines. Then it had the general statement that we recognized that the imports were creating a problem. This he could use to say we were going to do something about that. Anyhow that letter was the basis for a textile program that we announced shortly after the election after entering the White House.

MORRISSEY: In our first interview – I should say after we finished our first interview – you said you had a story about Foster Furcolo that you wanted to put on tape.

FELDMAN: During the 1958 campaign Furcolo was running for governor at the same time that Kennedy was running for the Senate. We maintained completely separate organizations, had very little to do with them. We ran the campaign by means of a system of county secre-

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taries. Furcolo used the regular Democratic organization in the state. Furcolo wanted to take advantage of the Kennedy name as much as possible. He was particularly anxious to do this because of what many people considered a snub in his prior campaign for the governorship. In his prior campaign for the governorship, he had come to the television studio with John F. Kennedy. Kennedy had said that he would endorse Furcolo, but he wanted to do it in his own way. Furcolo tried to press him on television, and Kennedy resented that. So he never got a really full endorsement. Now we denied that this had been intended as a snub. And for all outward appearances, Furcolo and Kennedy were good friends. Of course, everybody who knew their relationship recognized that they were not good friends, and that Kennedy was not anxious to support Furcolo strongly in his bid. But the surface amenities were observed; they were amenable on the surface.

Furcolo kept pressing Kennedy for a joint appearance and a joint statement. Finally, it was agreed that they would both appear together in a television studio toward the end of the campaign. They both did come. Then the problem became just how they would be seated and what they would say,

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who would speak first and what the format would be. Well, to decide questions like this was just about impossible with the Furcolo organization. There was just nobody in authority there who could make the decision. Even if Furcolo made the decision, you could count on his wanting to be on the extreme right, which is the best television spot, his wanting to open, which is the best thing to do, his wanting also to close, and so on. So there wasn't a great deal of purpose in discussing it with him, and we didn't until just a few minutes before the time to sit down in the studio for the telecast. Then we conceived of a really brilliant idea.

Representing us was an advertising agency called Dowd and Company. One of the men working for Dowd was a fairly impressive looking person who looked like he could fit in as the executive of any big company so I suggested to him that he simply tell everybody what they were to do, walk into the studio and tell everybody what to do, seat the candidates down. They wouldn't know who he was or what he was or anything, and they'd be inclined to take orders. Sure enough, that's exactly what he did. He walked into the studio. When the candidates walked in, he said,

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“Senator Kennedy, you sit here. Governor Furcolo, you sit here. Senator Kennedy, you're going to open. You're going to have five minutes....” very quickly, you know. In about two minutes he gave out all the instructions, and this is the way it was carried out. [Laughter] Oh yes, Kennedy wanted to leave because he had some place else to go before the end of the program. One of the conflicts was that Furcolo wanted him to sit there and have the television camera on Kennedy while Furcolo was speaking. So the director went to the cameraman and said, “Now, during the last ten minutes, why, you're going to keep the camera on Governor Furcolo because he's going to be giving his statement, telling about how great Massachusetts is. At that point, there's no point in Senator Kennedy being around here.” I don't believe that to this day anybody knows that this fellow was a stranger to the

whole effort. He just was an advertising man that we had enlisted like an actor. [Laughter] To me it reflected the fact that almost anybody who appears to have an air of authority and will assume responsibility can go in and take over. Remember this fellow had nothing whatsoever to do with the telecast with the studio or with the network or

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anything else.

MORRISSEY: And the whole thing came off?

FELDMAN: It came off very well, and we kid each other about that. So, as you know, the campaign ended a way in which both candidates won, but they remained rather cool to each other.

MORRISSEY: This one's leaping out of context but were you involved in late 1960 and early '61 with the choice of a successor to John Kennedy's Senate seat and how Furcolo entered into this problem?

FELDMAN: Oh, yes. Well, I wasn't directly concerned in it, no, but I did meet with Furcolo's representative. I've forgotten his name now. He came down to talk about who would succeed to John F. Kennedy's Senate seat. Now, with John F. Kennedy President of the United States, Furcolo pretty much had to take orders from John F. Kennedy. So there wasn't too much of a problem about it. Furcolo had his own candidate. Indeed, what I think Furcolo really wanted was to have the job himself. He wanted to be the senator, but Kennedy was determined that he should not be. A good many people were considered. The only conversation I had with the Senator was over – let's see who it; I've even forgotten who it was – whether

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or not he would be an appropriate person and all the Senator said was, "Well, now Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] has always been a great supporter of ours, and he did a great job in West Virginia. He said he'd like the seat. So why shouldn't we go for Ben?" Now Senator Kennedy did not make the decision in my presence. I don't even know with whom he made the decision. He felt it would be acceptable to everybody because Ben Smith had been a mayor of Gloucester, as I remember, and he certainly was a close friend of his. So he thought he'd be a good fellow to put in. Furcolo did not like the idea. That I knew too because I talked to, I guess it was, Phil Hyman (?) – something like that; the Governor's secretary whatever his name was – who came down and saw me and tried to persuade me that it ought to be somebody else other than Ben Smith. But he was talking to the wrong fellow anyhow. I had very little to do with it. I was just keeping him happy. All I did was assure him that we were going to work with Governor Furcolo, and that we had high regard for him and that all these rumors that there was antagonism between them were exaggerated. As a matter of fact, they weren't but this was the line I had to follow.

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MORRISSEY: At the time that James Burns [James MacGregor Burns] wrote his biography of John Kennedy did this cause something of a stir in the Senator's office?

FELDMAN: Well, we didn't want an official biographer who was just a hack writer. Lots of people wanted to do biographies and lots of people did biographies – some bad and some fair and none good, except the Burns' ones. I'll come to that. We couldn't avoid having biographies written about John F. Kennedy, but the Senator wanted somebody with an independent reputation of his own to do a biography. Now I suggested Arthur Schlesinger, as a matter of fact, but nobody thought Arthur would do it. Jim Burns had been in touch with the Kennedys and said that he was interested in doing the biography. So the question really was whether we should have an "official" biography or whether we should just leave it to other people to do whatever they could. Well, the arguments in favor of having an official biography were overwhelming. Jim Burns came in and talked to the Senator and said that he would not do it unless he was given complete freedom and access to files and people and could pay whatever he wanted to. Well, I

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talked to Jim and Ted Sorensen talked to Jim and the Senator talked to Jim. We thought that his leanings were such that he would do a fair job. We knew that another biography was being written by a fellow named Plout and, I think, Martin. It was a biography by two people. We were sure that that would not be a friendly one so we wanted somebody who was good to counterbalance that. It was decided that Jim Burns would be the person to do that. He was very carefully given no instructions concerning attitudes he should take. We didn't even ask for any right to review or vote what he had written. He did, in fact, submit parts to us, and he did, in fact, show us all of it before it was published. But he would not change anything that we objected to. There were a good many parts of the book that we objected to. He spent a lot of time. We even gave him all the records that we had in the attic of the Senate Office Building. He went up there rummaging around. When he couldn't find anything and had a question to ask, he'd come down and ask it of us and we would answer it as honestly as we could. He seemed to be most concerned with the effort of Kennedy to become a liberal, I guess. That seemed to annoy him

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continuously during the entire time he was writing the biography because most of the questions he would ask me would be directed toward that discussion. When he wrote the biography, we felt that he had incorrectly described the Senator. I felt quite upset about it. Ted Sorensen felt upset about it. He wrote a very nasty letter to Jim Burns, a biting letter, which in itself is a classic I think. The part we objected to more than anything else was the

description of Kennedy as “cold and unfeeling.” Now, in my opinion, Senator Kennedy was anything but cold and unfeeling. I think he was very warm, and he was a true liberal. I think people who pretend to say the right thing all the time, who really conform to the outline of a liberal image are not true liberals. I think Kennedy was a thoughtful liberal. He came to liberal philosophy because he’d thought it out and decided that this was in the best interests of the people he represented. Now Jim Burns didn’t have that flavor in his book. Jim Burns had the opposite flavor, and this we all resented a great deal.

MORRISSEY: Is that it?

FELDMAN: That’s it.

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