

## **Francis R. Valeo**

Secretary of the Senate, 1966-1977

Secretary to the Majority, 1963-1966

Administrative Assistant to Senator Mike Mansfield, 1958-1963

On loan from LRS to Foreign Relations Committee, 1952-1958

Chief, Foreign Affairs Division of the Legislative Reference Service 1950-1952

Foreign Affairs Division, Legislative Reference Service, Library of Congress, 1946-1950

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### **PREFACE**

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The careers of Secretary of the Senate Francis Valeo and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield were so thoroughly intertwined for so many years that it was only natural for Frank Valeo's oral history to also be a memoir of Mike Mansfield. For decades their interests and activities ran parallel: Mansfield as representative, senator, majority whip, majority leader, member of the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations Committees, and Far Eastern specialist; Valeo as chief of the Foreign Affairs Division of the Legislative Reference Service and specialist in the Far East, staff member of the Foreign Relations Committee, assistant to Senator Mansfield as majority whip and majority leader, Senate Democratic party secretary, and secretary of the Senate.

Both men were born in New York City of immigrant, Catholic families: Mansfield in Greenwich Village on March 16, 1903; Valeo in Brooklyn on January 13, 1916. Both men became interested in China: Mansfield studying and teaching Far Eastern history at Montana State University; Valeo studying Asia during his graduate program at New York University. Both first visited China while in military service: Mansfield as a Marine P.F.C. in 1922; Valeo as an army sergeant in 1944—at the same time that Congressman Mansfield was touring China on a special mission for President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After the war, Frank Valeo returned to the Legislative Reference Service where among other assignments he began doing

special projects for Congressman Mansfield, generally based on their mutual interests in the Far East. In the 1950s, when Mansfield went to the Senate, Valeo served occasionally as a staff member of the Foreign Relations Committee, on loan from the Library of Congress. The two men traveled together extensively, frequently to Southeast Asia. They were in Hanoi on the eve of the French evacuation, and they repeatedly visited Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. In later years both became critical of the war in Vietnam. And in 1972, Valeo accompanied Senator Mansfield on the first congressional visit to China since the Communist revolution.

In 1959, while Mansfield was serving as Senate majority whip, he invited Frank Valeo to become his assistant. Valeo remained in this position until 1963, when the Bobby Baker scandal shook the Senate. Senator Mansfield, then majority leader, appointed him to replace the seemingly irreplaceable Baker as Democratic party secretary. Among the duties of that post, Valeo found himself "counting heads" before votes to assist the leader in legislative maneuvering. He performed that task during the protracted debates over the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and through the explosion of Great Society legislation in 1965. The following year, the Senate elected Frank Valeo as secretary of the Senate, a post he held until 1977. Although supervising a vast assortment of administrative functions for the entire Senate, he continued to devote special attention to the majority leader, acting as his advisor, speech writer, traveling companion, and surrogate.

This oral history recounts the long and fruitful working relationship between a staff member and a senator. It provides a panorama of American foreign policy in the Far East, from World War II to the Philippine turmoil of 1986. And it offers an institutional history of the Senate by the secretary who presided over much of its modernization.

"Both as secretary to the majority and secretary of the Senate, Frank Valeo brought honor to himself and to the institution that he served," said Senator Robert C. Byrd when Frank Valeo retired as secretary of the Senate. "He has a deep appreciation for the traditions and heritage of this body, and he has labored selflessly for it." Senator Quentin Burdick added, "As a person Frank has exemplified the same qualities as his close and dear friend, the former Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana. He has been intelligent, kind, open, fair, and honorable in his relationship with all the distinguished members of this chamber . . . . There is no question that he understood the mechanics and the spirit of the United States Senate better than anyone else."

**About The Interviewer:** --Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has taught at the University College of the University of Maryland, George Mason University, and the Northern Virginia Community College, and conducted a survey of automated bibliographical

systems for the American Historical Association. He has published several articles on American political and economic history, a book, James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), and has edited the Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series) for publication by the committee. He has served as an officer of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), and in 1984 received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.